YOUR FAMILY TREE **BRICK WALLS** SMASHED!

BRITAIN'S BESTSELLING FAMILY HISTORY MAGAZINE

ISSUE 233 AUGUST 2025 £5.75

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?®

MILLIONS OF JEWISH RECORDS NOW ONLINE

9 PRO TIPS FROM THE SHOW

The lead genealogist behind *Who Do You Think You Are?* shares the secrets of her success

SURVIVING HITLER'S FLYING BOMBS How the Nazis rained terror on the British people

OBITUARIES Where to find more tributes online

My family lived through the German occupation of Jersey

FIND FAMILY AFTER WW2 How to trace more recent relatives

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- Were your family **smugglers**?
- Get more from **Findmypast hints**
- Trace your **Oxfordshire** kin

DISCOVER THE WHOLE PICTURE

When you explore your family tree, you find names, dates and places. But it's the extra details that truly reveal your family story.

Ancestry has a huge range of historical records, and with an average of two million added every day, there's always more to discover. So even when you think you know your family, they can keep surprising you.

ancestry®
Bring your backstory to life™

Do you have a fascinating family story to share?

We'd love to hear about your discoveries, email us at *yourstory@ancestry.co.uk*

Welcome

Sarah's Top Tip

Look beyond standard newspaper collections to find more obituaries

If you turn to **page 40**, you will see a photograph of my great grandfather with his obituary from the *British Medical Journal*. Finding his obituary online was such a joy for me, and I have since found obituaries for other family members using specialist publications from engineering journals to company magazines. Parish magazines can also be worth hunting down. So don't assume that just because you can't find an obituary in a local newspaper, one doesn't exist. Check to see if a relevant specialist publication exists. It may even be available in your local library, or better still online.

One of the many things I love about genealogy is that I'm always learning. I learn from our contributors, I learn from our readers and I learn from my own research (I even sometimes learn from my ancestors!). Watching the latest series of *Who Do You Think You Are?* made me think how much the lead genealogists of the show must have also learnt over the years. I remember meeting up with Sara Khan, one of those genealogists, when I was working on the launch issue of this magazine in 2007, and I was delighted when she agreed to share some of the core tips she has picked up from working on the programme (**page 14**).

We also turn our eyes this month to more recent family history. As people try to connect with DNA matches, researching recent decades has become more important. Privacy laws mean far fewer records from after the Second World War are online, but Janet Few shares some on **page 28**. These include digitised newspapers, which ties in nicely with our article on obituaries (**page 38**).

Finally, we've got a slew of websites for tracing Jewish ancestry (**page 35**), a handy guide to Oxfordshire research (**page 64**) and some great reader stories, including an account of the occupation of Jersey by the Germans (**page 24**). If you find anything in your family tree that you would like to share, please let us know. Happy hunting!

Sarah

Sarah Williams Editor
sarah.williams@ourmedia.co.uk

Get In Touch

Advertising
t 0117 476 7313
e *andy.williams@ourmedia.co.uk*

Editorial & Website Queries
t 0117 300 8621
e *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*

Magazine App Support
w *ourmediaapps.co.uk/digital-contact-form*

Q&A Queries
e *wdytyaquestions@ourmedia.co.uk*

Subscriptions Help & FAQs
t 03330 162120*
t +44 1604 973728 (overseas)
w *ourmediashop.com/contact-us*
w *ourmediashop.com/faqs*

*UK calls will cost the same as other standard fixed-line numbers (starting 01 or 02) and are included as part of any inclusive or free minutes allowances (if offered by your phone tariff). Outside of free call packages call charges from mobile phones will cost between 3p and 55p per minute. Lines are open Monday to Friday 9am–5pm.

Contributors

Sara Khan
Sara is one of two lead genealogists who head up the research team for *Who Do You Think You Are?*, and she shares some of her tips for quick and accurate research on **page 14**.

Jan Gore
Jan's family stories about the Luftwaffe's V1 bombing campaign during the Second World War (**page 18**) led to her writing three books and researching the lives of victims.

Felix Rowe
Although smugglers may not have been documented (unless they were caught), they played a major role in coastal communities as history writer Felix reminds us on **page 56**.

COVER IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES/CHILDREN SITTING IN A DOORWAY LEFT BEHIND IN BOMBED-OUT DORIS STREET, LAMBETH, LONDON, 7 MAY 1943

CONTENTS
AUGUST 2025

FEATURES

14 Tips From The Show ON THE COVER
Sara Khan, a genealogist who has worked on dozens of episodes of *WDYTYA?*, shares her favourite strategies for uncovering ancestors' fascinating stories

18 Flying Bombs ON THE COVER
Hitler rained terror on the UK in the Second World War with an onslaught of flying-bomb attacks, says Jan Gore

56 Smugglers ON THE COVER
With tariffs in the news, Felix Rowe investigates the criminals who smuggled goods into 18th-century Britain

RESEARCH ADVICE

28 Focus On ON THE COVER
Janet Few outlines the challenges of tracing relations in the latter half of the 20th century, and shares her expert tips for overcoming them

35 Best Websites ON THE COVER
Jonathan Scott reveals the most important online resources for locating Jewish ancestors

38 Record Masterclass ON THE COVER
Chloe O'Shea explains how to find a relative's obituary

54 Tech Tips ON THE COVER
Nick Peers walks us through viewing, reviewing and attaching hints to our Findmypast family tree

YOUR RESEARCH

24 Reader Story ON THE COVER
"My family lived through the German occupation of Jersey," says author Sarah Le Marchand

62 Eureka Moment
Jennifer Wallig spent decades tracing her father's birth family, eventually solving the case with the help of the 1930 US census, a DNA test – and a private eye

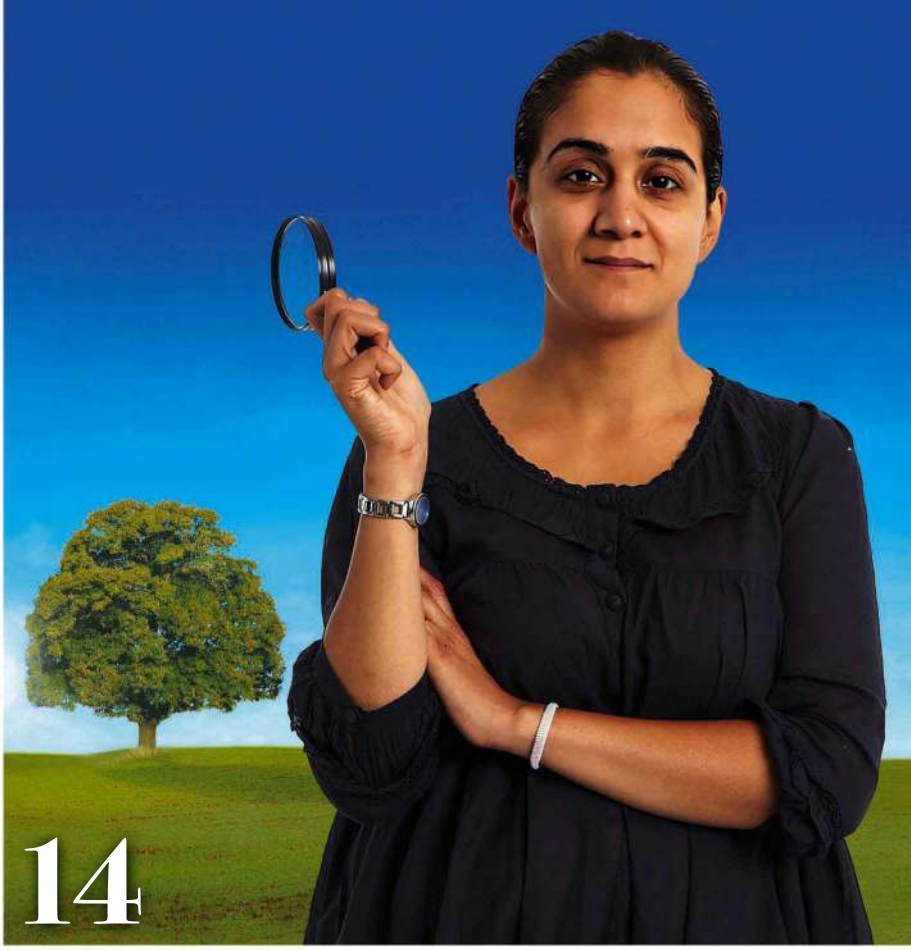
74 Family Hero
Katy Phoon celebrates her mother and a friendship forged during the Second Sino-Japanese War

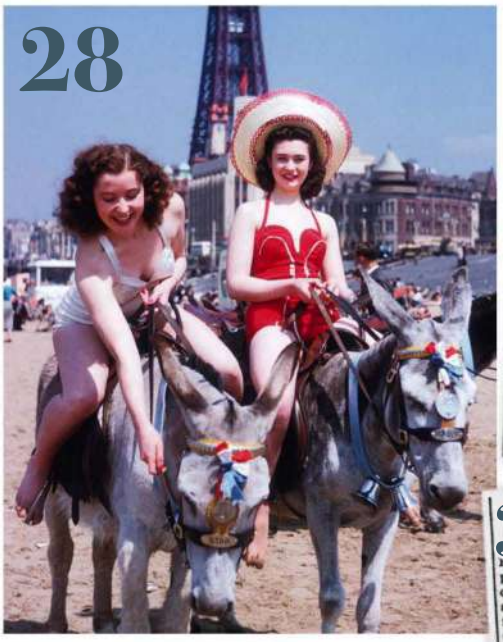
REGULARS

6 Letters
Your ideas, comments and advice

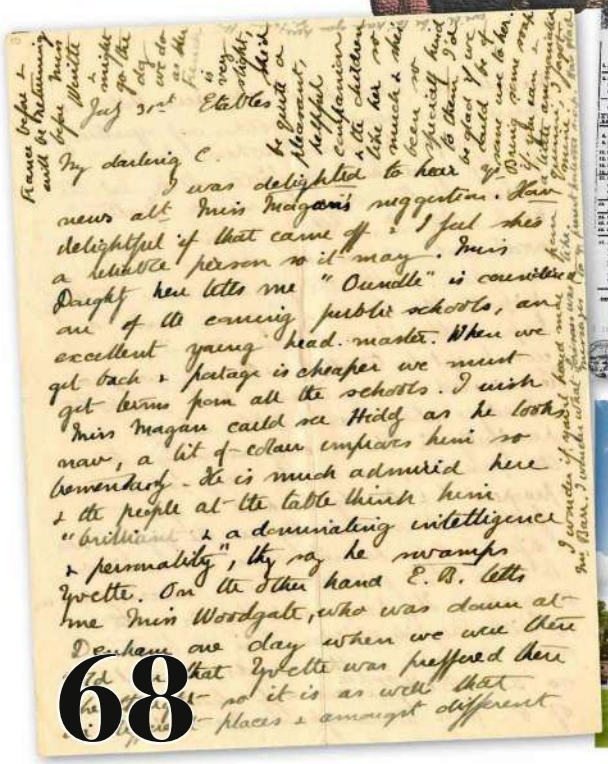
9 What's On
Online and in-person talks, shows and exhibitions

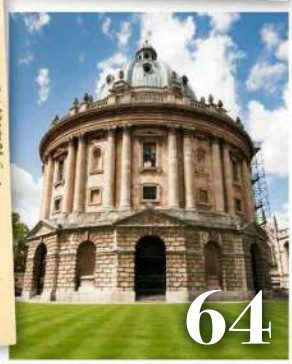
10 News
All of the latest developments, including the addition of 69,000 records to a database of railway accidents





GETTY IMAGES





GETTY IMAGES | UNP/ADAM FRADGLEY | ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING ARCHIVES

SUBSCRIPTION OFFER 22

Subscribe Today And Get A Month's FREE Trial

13 Off The Record
Alan Crosby reveals our ancestors' wild summer celebrations in Tudor times

43 Q&A ON THE COVER
From finding a great grandfather's will to service in the Artists Rifles during the First World War, the accuracy of published pedigrees, and dating a photograph of a mysterious schoolboy, we smash your brick walls

51 Your Projects
Rosemary Collins learns about a wide-ranging website celebrating the heritage of Cumbria

52 The Big Picture
Morris dancers in the playground of Thomas Street Girls School, Limehouse, Stepney, East London, 1908

61 *Wdytya? Magazine* Shop
Back issues, magazine storage and certificate binders

64 Around Britain ON THE COVER
Jonathan Scott presents everything you need to know to research your forebears from Oxfordshire online

68 Gem From The Archive
A letter between nurses and life partners, c1920

GUIDE

70 Books & Digital Picks
This month's family history inspiration

72 TV & Radio
Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace returns

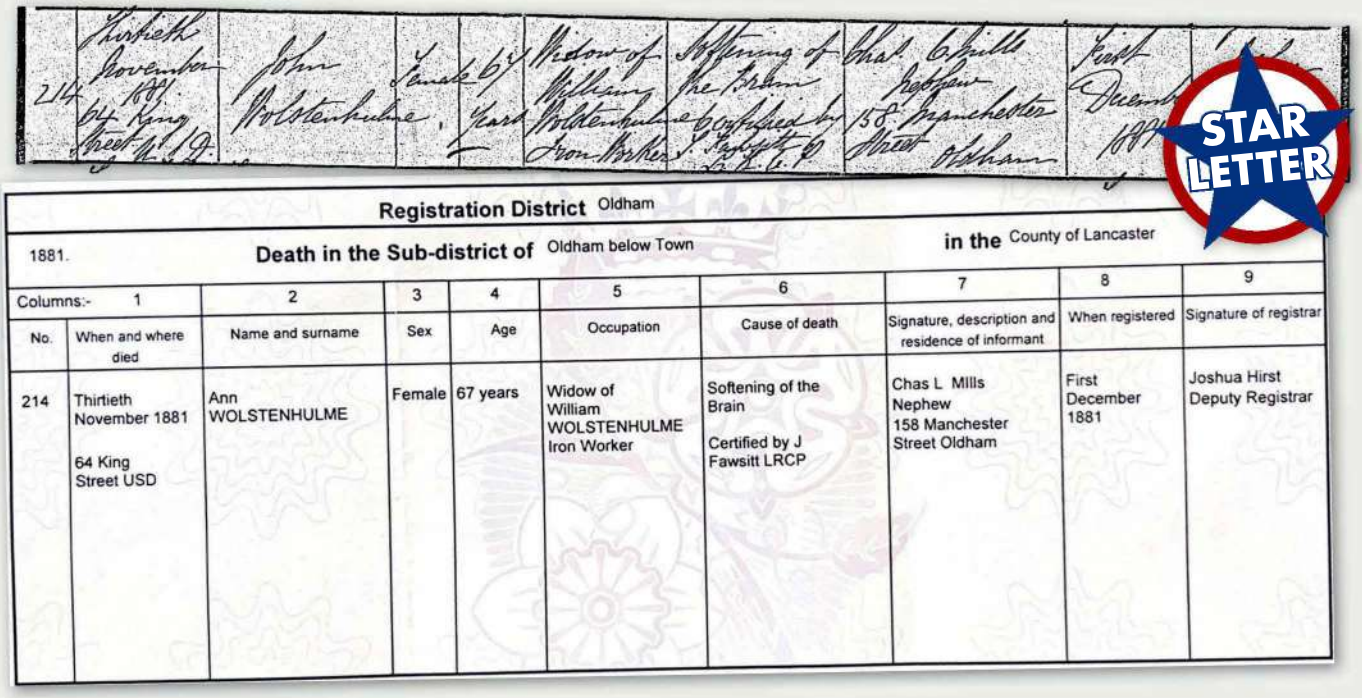
Letters

Email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*
Write to *WDYTYA? Magazine*, Eagle House, Bristol BS1 4ST

WIN an AncestryDNA test kit from **ancestry.co.uk**
WORTH £79

The writer of our star letter wins an AncestryDNA test **worth £79** – so drop us a line and share your thoughts with us.

Transcription Brick Wall Smashed!



STAR LETTER

Registration District Oldham

1881. Death in the Sub-district of Oldham below Town in the County of Lancaster

Columns:- 1		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
214	Thirtieth November 1881 64 King Street USD	Ann WOLSTENHULME	Female	67 years	Widow of William WOLSTENHULME Iron Worker	Softening of Brain Certified by J Fawsitt LRCP	Chas L Mills Nephew 158 Manchester Street Oldham	First December 1881	Joshua Hirst Deputy Registrar

Brenda has established that these are both records of the death of her forebear Ann Wolstenholme, bizarrely renamed "John" in the GRO's record

We all know that transcription errors can get in the way of research, but sometimes they creep in in the oddest of ways.

Like most family historians, I like to have the three main dates for my direct line: birth/baptism, marriage and death. After a lot of work, I had managed to obtain every date for all of them back to my 3x great grandparents (excluding unknown fathers), apart from one. Ann Wolstenholme, née Mills, lived in Oldham throughout her life and I had her in the 1881 census, but not in 1891, so I was fairly certain she had died between those dates. I often use the download feature on FreeBMD (**freebmd.org.uk**), which enables me to sort possible entries in a spreadsheet and narrow down the likely candidates. FreeBMD of course has the advantage that you can search longer periods, by just surname or first name, and also use wildcards. There were a few options (not least because Wolstenholme has a few possible spellings) and I obtained no fewer than six death certificates, but none was the right one.

One day, in the absence of other ideas, I searched Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) for Ann and lo and behold up came her burial in Oldham. It was definitely the right one, because the address matched her address in the 1881 census and it gave me a burial date of 3 December 1881. However, neither FreeBMD nor the website of the General Register Office (GRO; **www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/**) had an Ann Wolstenholme death in Oldham on the relevant date.

I asked the members of a Facebook Group whether a death certificate would have been required at that time for a burial to take place. The responses I received were interesting. The first one said that the death record was on the Lancashire BMD index (**lancashirebmd.org.uk**) – Ann Wolstenhulme aged 67 in Oldham – so clearly the death had been registered. And the second one said that on the GRO index there was a John Wolstenhulme registered in the same quarter/place and with the same age, but he only came up if you searched for females rather than males.

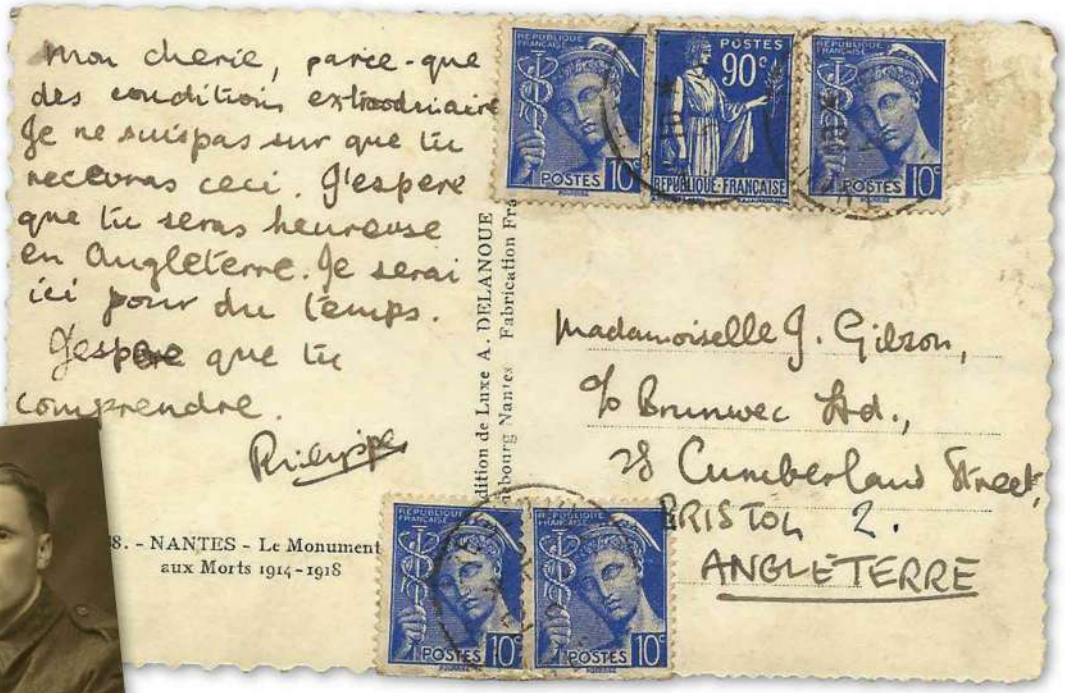
Armed with this information I obtained the digital copy of John's death certificate. It shows John as female and the widow of William, with the correct address. So between the Oldham registration and the GRO record, the name was mistranscribed which, with the gender difference, had made the record very difficult to find.

I have since obtained a certified copy of the original record in Oldham which shows Ann with her correct name. I am so glad that I persevered because the informant for the death was Ann's nephew Charles, and this information led me to discover that I had attributed her to the wrong family and it enabled me to correct the line before her.
Brenda Hill, by email

Editor Replies **Great detective work Brenda. We should always remember that births, marriages and deaths were registered locally, and the records we order from the GRO are copies of this locally held information. Details of indexes for locally held records are at ukbmd.org.uk.**

Bypassing The British Army's Censors

I wanted to share a postcard that my father, Philip Barker, sent to my mother, Joan, while he was serving as a soldier during the Second World War. He cleverly found a way to tell my mother where he was in France by simply writing a postcard and putting it into the French postal system, bypassing the Army's censors. They married in February 1940 during a week's leave, and he immediately returned to France. In June 1940, he was rescued from the sinking of HMT *Lancastria* and returned to England. He served in the Middle East, and was demobbed in December 1945.
Peter Barker, by email



Peter emailed us this photograph of a postcard that his soldier father Philip Barker *(inset)* sent to his beloved Joan from France while he was serving in the country during the Second World War

Editor Replies I love the way that Philip says he can't tell Joan where he is but "hopes she understands". You can almost see him winking as he writes it just above the word "Nantes"!

Harsh Treatment For An Unmarried Mum

I really enjoyed the final episode of the current series of *Who Do You Think You Are?*, about Diane Morgan. One of her female Scottish ancestors had five illegitimate children in Dumfries and she pursued the fathers and won every time at court, forcing them to acknowledge the children and pay child maintenance.

I have one such female ancestor, who did the same thing as Diane's relative. Her name was Susan Haddock (1801–1839) from the village of Lusby in Lincolnshire. She had three illegitimate children, all born in various Lincolnshire parishes. She pursued the father each time at the local quarter sessions to force them to pay for the upkeep of the children, including my 4x great grandmother Olive Haddock (1825–1889). Although I knew she was born illegitimate, there is a recognizance dated 24 August 1825, summoning the father Daniel Peacock to the next quarter sessions and a certificate dated 31 October 1825, to confirm that he had paid for the maintenance of his daughter Olive Haddock.

However, only three weeks after the baptism of Susan Haddock's third illegitimate child, a daughter called Rebecca Haddock, she was sentenced to nine months in Spilsbury Gaol in Lincolnshire, with hard labour, for bastardy at the Alford petty sessions, brought about by the Rev. Thomas Hardwicke Rawnsley and the Rev. Joseph Walls. I believe this was really harsh, just because she had given birth to three illegitimate children.
Lee Passmore, by email

Susan Allan enjoyed Fred Sirieix's *WDYTYA?* episode
Excellent episode and Fred was so fabulous in his quest and so appreciative of how much his ancestors had survived to allow him and his children to be here today.

Editor Replies What horrendous treatment for a woman who had only recently given birth, and had two other children who were depending on her. I am glad that we are a more understanding society now.

Are You Related To Jane Austen?

Like most teenage girls, who discovered Jane Austen when reading *Pride and Prejudice* for the first time, I was immediately entranced by Lizzie's vivacity and wit. Fast-forward into my twenties and I was even more enthralled by Austen's social commentary. In fact Jane Austen was one of the many reasons I developed a deep love of literature and wanted to become an English teacher.

Decades later, one Sunday evening, I was working on my family tree when I discovered that I shared a common ancestor with Austen. It felt like winning the lottery. I leapt from my seat and screamed with excitement!

Since then, I feel my life has been made richer in some way by this precious nugget of information. Although we are distantly related, (my 11th great-grandfather, Thomas Austen, from Horsmonden in Kent, is Jane's 5th great-grandfather), nevertheless, this genealogical connection is so valuable to me in a way that only Jane Austen devotees and/or genealogy enthusiasts would understand. The scientific reality is that Jane and I probably only share about 0.05% of our DNA, but so what? It's a very precious 0.05%! And, of course, there are all the questions I now have about the Austens in Horsmonden, and the realisation that I must be one of hundreds, if not thousands, of people who have discovered their shared ancestry with Jane Austen and want to know more!

So, I was wondering if there are other Jane Austen relations out there who would like to get together to celebrate her 250th anniversary this year?

When considering a venue, I have another Austen connection: I am a librarian at The Abbey school in Reading, where Jane and her sister, Cassandra, went to school for a year from the summer of 1785 to Winter ▶

Do you have a connection to the Austen family in your tree?

Sandra sent us this photograph of her father Frank Hibbert *(second from right)* with his colleagues

1786. Therefore, this would be the ideal venue and Reading has a great train network with very good connections to most areas of the UK.

Please get in contact if you, or someone you know, has Jane Austen in their family tree, and is interested in attending such an event. If you want to find out more, please email me (see below). I look forward to meeting you.
Joanne Wenman, by email

@drdaillewellyn.bsky.social shared his feedback on Will Young's's episode of *WDYTYA?*
That was a great episode. Will Young came across very well indeed and a remarkable set of stories.

Editor Replies **If you want to contact Joanne, email her at wenjoanne1@gmail.com.**

My Father Made Douglas Bader's Legs

I was interested to read the news article in your May issue about the back issues of *Soldier* magazine going online, and came across an article headlined "Sinews of Steel" in the 30 March 1946 edition, about the Roehampton Limb Fitting Centre. My dad, Frank Hibbert, who has just had his 101st birthday on 31 May, was employed by JE Hanger & Co. Ltd from 25 August 1941 to 28 February 1986.

Dad recalls the amputees that he met through the years, especially Squadron Leader Douglas Bader when he came for leg fittings. When Bader was a prisoner of war in Germany, the Germans took a liking to him and would play golf with him. The small legs that were made for him were dropped during an air raid over Germany, and he duly received them.

Reach for the Sky, the 1956 film about Bader, was filmed at Hanger's. Dad met its star Kenneth More, and said that he was a very approachable man.
Sandra Beavis, by email

Editor Replies **What amazing work your father did for men like Douglas Bader. I'm glad our news story about the Army's magazine prompted your letter.**

More AI Please!

Thank you for Nick Peers' 'Tech Tips' in the May issue explaining how to use ChatGPT to transcribe handwriting. I will give that a go. For context, I am 60 years old and on a steep learning curve!

I have started using ChatGPT to plan my holidays, and the main limitation is my lack of understanding of its abilities.

I'd love to see a series on AI and genealogy, as I am sure that there are uses beyond my imagination. DNA is an obvious choice, but there must be so much more. Perhaps you could give this consideration?
Carol Flux, by email

Editor Replies **Thanks for writing in Carol – I really appreciate hearing from readers about what they would like us to feature. It's your magazine, after all! I hope you also enjoyed Debbie Kennett's feature about AI and genealogy in the July issue. How are other readers using AI tools?**

YOUR LETTER IN PRINT We reserve the right to edit any letters sent to the magazine. Messages posted to our Facebook wall and tweets sent to us may also appear in print. The choice of Star Letter is the editor's and the prize is subject to change.

ourmedia

Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine is published by Our Media Limited

Issue 233 – August 2025

Editorial
Editor Sarah Williams
Production editor Seth Burgess
Features editor Rosemary Collins
Art editor Robbie Bennie

Advertising Sales
Advertising manager Andy Williams
0117 476 7313
Inserts Laurence Robertson
00 353 876 902208

Marketing
Head of loyalty, CRM and retention Rosa Sherwood
Head of acquisitions, customer marketing and experience Clive Evans-Morris

Press And PR
Head of PR Dominic Lobley

Content Operations
Director Sarah Powell
Content operations specialist Holly Donmall
Ad design Camilla Owen
Senior ad coordinator Charles Thurlow

Subscriptions And Back Issues
t 03330 162120*
w **ourmediashop.com/contact-us**
or write to *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine*, PO Box 3320, 3 Queensbridge, Northampton, UK
Basic annual subscription rates:
UK £74.75, Eire & Europe €70, ROW $75

Syndication & Licensing
Director of licensing & syndication Tim Hudson
Magazine syndication executive Emma Brunt

Our Media Ltd
Brand lead Rob Brock
Chief executive officer Andy Marshall

Wall To Wall Media Ltd
Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine is produced under licence from Wall to Wall Media Ltd. Wall to Wall Media Ltd is part of Shed Media, PLC and is one of the world's leading producers of factual and drama programming. Wall to Wall is the producer of the multi-award winning television series *Who Do You Think You Are?* The series is committed to reducing its carbon emissions and has signed up to 10:10 (**www.1010global.org**). This has involved hiring more local crews and taking fewer flights while continuing to make a series that goes to wherever the story leads. Visit **www.walltowall.co.uk** for more information.

© Our Media Ltd 2025

ISSN: 1755-7690
Printed by William Gibbons Ltd.

ipso Regulated We abide by IPSO's rules and regulations. To give feedback about our magazines, please visit **ourmedia.co.uk**, email *editorialcomplaints@ourmedia.co.uk*, or write to Legal, Our Media Ltd, Eagle House, Bristol, BS1 4ST.

Our Media Company is working to ensure that all of its paper comes from well-managed, Forest Stewardship Council-certified forests and other controlled sources. This magazine is printed on FSC-certified paper. It can be recycled for use in newspapers and packaging. Please remove any gifts, samples or wrapping and dispose of them at your local collection point.

*UK calls will cost the same as other standard fixed-line numbers (starting 01 or 02) and are included as part of any inclusive or free minutes allowances (if offered by your phone tariff). Outside of free call packages call charges from mobile phones will cost between 3p and 55p per minute. Lines are open Monday to Friday 9am–5pm. Overseas subscribers call +44 1604 973728.

What's On

Email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk* to feature your event here for free

PICK OF THE MONTH

Improve your knowledge of military records

Pre-1914 Military Ancestors

9 August

w **https://portal.sog.org.uk/Event/view/374633**

British troops arrive in South Africa during the Second Boer War

Many of our forebears served in the armed forces before the First World War, and you can get tips on uncovering their stories with this full day of online talks from the Society of Genealogists. The talks include 'Over the Hills and Far Away or, Finding Your Napoleonic Soldier Relative', 'No End of a Lesson: the Boer War (1899–1902) and Its Legacies', 'Travelling at the Speed of Knots: Pre-War Maritime Movers', 'Auntie Kate Remembers Her First Husband, a Crimean War Veteran' and 'A Military Heritage: Finding Your British Army Lineage in Pre-20th Century Records'. Attendees also receive a free copy of *My Ancestor Was in the British Army* by Christopher and Michael Watts (Society of Genealogists, 2009). £60 for members of the society, otherwise £75.

IN PERSON

Anchors Away – Suffolk And The Sea

Until 27 September

a The Hold, Ipswich
t 01473 296666
w **https://www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/whats-on/**

This exhibition explores Suffolk's maritime history including pirates, smugglers and shipwrecks. Free.

From The Archive: Aberdeen Harbour

Until 11 January 2026

a Aberdeen Art Gallery
t 0300 020 0293
w **tinyurl.com/aberdeen-gov-harbour**

Discover how Aberdeen Harbour has evolved with this exhibition that uses photos from the archive of the Port of Aberdeen. Free.

Was Your Ancestor A Gypsy?

15 July

a Nursteed Centre, Devizes
t 01380 723191
w **wiltshirefhs.co.uk/devizes-branch**

Learn how to trace your Romany ancestry with Beverley Walker in this talk from Wiltshire Family History Society. Free.

Looted: Two Families, Nazi Theft And The Search For Restitution

16 July – 10 October 2025

a The Wiener Holocaust Library, London
t 020 7636 7247
w **wienerholocaustlibrary.org/exhibition/looted-two-families-nazi-theft-and-the-search-for-restitution/**

In 1939 the Wertheimers, an Austrian Jewish family, were forced to sell their home for a fraction of its worth. Some of the Wertheimers' belongings came into the possession of their pro-Nazi neighbours, the Kaltenhausers. Decades later Katharina Mayrhofer, a descendant of the Kaltenhausers, came together in a collaborative project of restitution and restoration with Helen Emily Davy, a descendant of the Wertheimers. This exhibition examines how descendants of victims of the Nazi era and of National Socialists confront a shared past. Free.

The Amazing Mr Bott – The Rise And Fall Of A Victorian Entrepreneur

23 July

a Manchester Central Library
w **mlfhs.uk/manchester/events/meetings**

This talk tells the story of Joseph Elton Bott, who went into business in Ancoats in the late 19th century with speaker Chris Tombs' great great grandfather. Free for members of Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society, £5 for non-members.

Islands Of The Medway Estuary

2 August

a Dartford Science and Technology College
t 01322 527604
w **tinyurl.com/nwkfhs-islands-medway-estuary**

Adam Taylor will discuss his exploration of the islands of the Medway Estuary and the lives of the people who lived there. Free to North West Kent Family History Society members, non-members asked to make a small donation.

Scots On The Move: Travel And Tourism In Victorian Scotland

4–29 August

a General Register House, Edinburgh
t 0131 202 0451
w **nrscotland.gov.uk/learning-and-events/exhibitions-and-displays/?section=upcoming-exhibitions**

This exhibition looks at how the birth of the railways transformed tourism in Scotland. Free.

ONLINE

Manorial Records For The Family Historian

16 July

w **chfhs.org.uk/manorial-records-for-the-family-historian-with-philip-saunders-493**

Philip Saunders shares his advice for using manorial records to boost your research into your tree in this talk from Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire Family History Society. Free.

Mapping Alchemy For Genealogists

16 July

w **berksfhs.org/events/mapping-alchemy-for-genealogists/?occurrence=2025-07-16**

In this webinar Dr Sophie Kay explains how to make the most of historic maps. Free for members of Berkshire Family History Society, £5 for non-members.

The Origins Of The Met's Detectives

18 July

w **tinyurl.com/eventbrite-tna-origins-detect**

Paul Carter, collections specialist at The National Archives at Kew, will reveal how societal upheavals led to the transition from private thief-takers, paid watchmen and prosecution associations to the adoption of regular police forces across England and Wales. Pay what you can, £5 suggested.

BOOK AHEAD

Find out more about DNA testing at this conference

Peak District Family History Conference

6 September

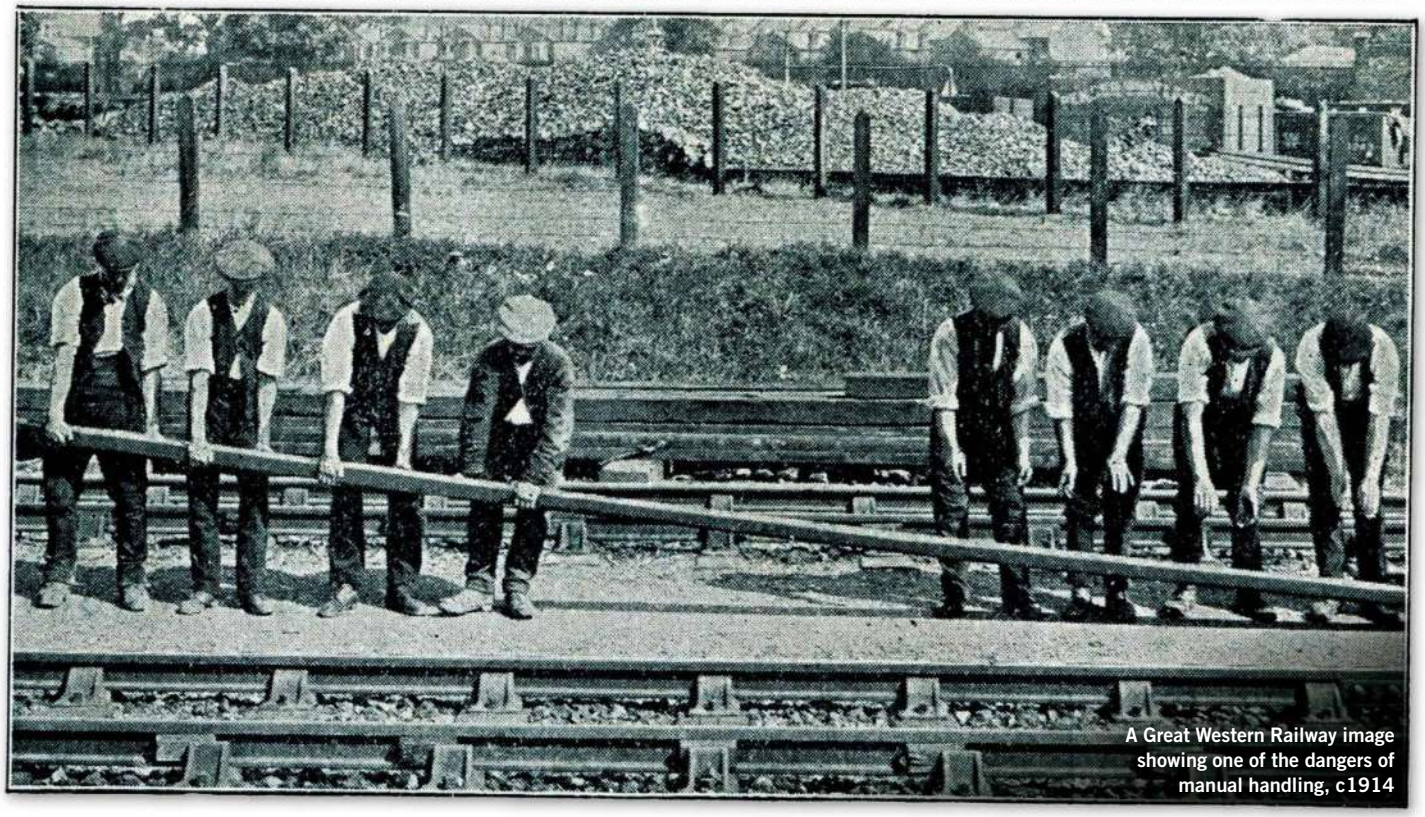
a Palace Hotel, Buxton
w **peakdistrictnetwork.wixsite.com/familyhistory/about-5**

This upcoming event from the Peak District Family History Network will feature talks including 'Progressing Your Family History' with Debbie Bradley and 'Unlocking the Secrets of DNA Testing' with Karen Evans, exhibition stalls and a prize draw. £30.

GETTY IMAGES

News

Rosemary Collins reports on the latest data releases and genealogy news



A Great Western Railway image showing one of the dangers of manual handling, c1914

RAILWAY WORK, LIFE & DEATH PROJECT/MIKE ESBESTER

Railway project adds 69,000 records

The Railway Work, Life & Death project (RWLD; railwayaccidents.port.ac.uk) has added 69,000 records of railway staff accidents to its database.

The records date from 1855–1929 and are taken from archives of English and Welsh railway companies that are held by The National Archives at Kew (TNA; **nationalarchives.gov.uk**). They are the oldest records in the project's database, as well as the first from TNA.

RWLD is a project dedicated to transcribing records of historic railway workers' accidents in Britain and Ireland, and understanding the experiences of workers at the time.

This addition means there are now about 125,000 records in the database.

The project's lead, Dr Mike Esbester of the University of Portsmouth, told *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine*, "The additional records are a hugely rich resource that tells us a great deal about working life for men and women in the 19th and early 20th centuries, but also about wider questions in society – for example, the place of women's employment; how and where we see disability; international migration and work, particularly via the South Wales docks/dock area records; how employers regarded their staff, the unions and the state; and the impact of war upon society.

"While on one level this is a very niche focus, on another the project speaks to so many, much bigger social, cultural, political and economic issues in the past, and arguments still raging in the present," he continued.

Dr Esbester added that although most of the records concern railway staff, they do also include other people including passengers and trespassers.

The earliest record in the collection is of North Eastern Railway (NER) bank rider George Cowley. He was injured on 12 May 1855 at Flatt's Incline on the Pontop Branch when, according to the record, he "fell before the wagons".

Dr Esbester also said that the records revealed that women's employment on the railways was earlier than most people thought. The first railwaywoman in the records is Mary Ramsey, an NER office cleaner who was run over and killed at South Shields, County Durham, in 1859 when she was taking ashes out from the station fireplace.

The records were launched during Volunteers' Week 2025, which took place on 2–8 June.

They were transcribed in a project dating back to 2018 by a team of volunteers at TNA, as well as online volunteers using the crowdsourcing transcription platform FromThePage (**fromthepage.com**).

The records were also released as 2025 marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of the modern British railway.

In the 200 days leading up to the bicentenary of the first British railway passenger journey on 27 September 2025, RWLD is publishing daily posts about accidents from its research on X (**x.com/RWLDproject**) and Bluesky (**bsky.app/profile/rwldproject.bsky.social**).

Family historians can search the database for free at **railwayaccidents.port.ac.uk/the-accidents/**.

NEWS IN BRIEF

The BL's chief executive Rebecca Lawrence and DC Thomson deputy chair Richard Hall (the firm owns Findmypast and the BNA)

British Library and Findmypast renew their newspaper partnership

Family history website Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**) and the British Library (BL; **bl.uk**) have announced that they are renewing their partnership for Findmypast to digitise the library's historic newspapers. Since the partnership launched in 2011 Findmypast has digitised more than 92 million pages of newspapers, available at the British Newspaper Archive (BNA; **britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**) and to Findmypast subscribers at the 'Everything' level. Another 70 million newspaper pages are expected to be digitised over the next five years.

The draft card of George Abney, of Denver, Colorado, is now available on Fold3

Fold3 adds 2.7 million Korean War draft cards

Military records website Fold3 (**fold3.com**) has added 2.7 million US draft-registration cards from the Korean War era. The digitised cards cover the states of Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, Vermont, Virginia and West Virginia, as well as the District of Columbia, Guam and the US Virgin Islands, and follow the first tranche of cards from Alaska and Wyoming, which were published last year. Fold3 is owned by Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**).

ONS gives green light to 2031 census of England and Wales

A census of England and Wales should be carried out in 2031, the Office for National Statistics (ONS; ons.gov.uk) has said.

In 2023, the ONS launched a consultation on proposals to abolish the census, replacing it with more continuous use of administrative data such as tax, benefit and border data to gather information on the population.

In its recommendations regarding the future of population and migration statistics in England and Wales, which have now been published, the ONS stated that it "is apparent from responses… that the time is not yet ripe to forego a whole-population questionnaire-based census".

As a result the ONS is recommending that the Government commissions and resources it to begin preparations for a questionnaire-based 2031 census.

The census would be digital-first, and its delivery would make use of technological developments including artificial intelligence.

A national census of the UK has been carried out every 10 years since 1841, apart from in 1941 due to the Second World War.

In its report into the findings of the 2023 consultation, which it has also now published, the ONS said that the genealogists who responded argued that a traditional census is "essential for future generations to understand their ancestry".

CAN YOU HELP?

English Heritage (**english-heritage.org.uk**) is hoping to trace the descendants of 31 men who took part in a riot against the closure of Bayham Abbey *(pictured)* near Tunbridge Wells 500 years ago. In 1525, the abbey was closed on the orders of Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. Local reports say that on 4 June 1525 more than 100 men stormed the abbey, demanding the reinstatement of the canons (ordained priests living a communal life). The canons were temporarily restored but removed a week later, and 31 men were indicted by the Crown for rioting whose names are listed at **english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/bayham-old-abbey/history/**. English Heritage is inviting the men's descendants to take part in a commemorative event this summer. If you think you are related, please email *press@english-heritage.org.uk*.

FINDMYPAST | GETTY IMAGES | ENGLISH HERITAGE

23andMe's head office in Mountain View, California

23andMe fined by ICO

Troubled DNA-testing firm 23andMe (23andme.com) has been fined £2.31 million by the UK Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) after thousands of UK users' data was breached by a hacker.

A joint investigation conducted by the ICO and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada found that between April and September 2023, "a hacker carried out a credential stuffing attack on 23andMe's platform, exploiting reused login credentials that were stolen from previous unrelated data breaches".

The hacker was able to access personal information belonging to 155,592 UK residents.

The news comes as the US company, which filed for bankruptcy in March, announced that it had accepted a $305 million purchase offer by TTAM Research Institute, a nonprofit public-benefit corporation led by 23andMe's co-founder and former CEO Anne Wojcicki.

TTAM's bid won out over a previous offer of $256 million from biotechnology company Regeneron Pharmaceuticals.

WW2 pilot's grave identified

The grave of a Second World War RAF pilot has been identified and rededicated 85 years after his death. Flying officer Philip Anthony Neville Cox was born in Sussex in 1915. He was reported missing when his plane failed to return from air operations over Dover, Kent, on 27 July 1940. Research by the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre at the Ministry of Defence found that he was buried in an unmarked grave in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Bergen-op-Zoom War Cemetery in The Netherlands (**tinyurl.com/cwgc-berg**). The ceremony *(pictured)* was held on 4 June.

130 years

The amount of time between the cancellation of Oscar Wilde's British Library pass following his conviction for homosexuality and its symbolic reinstatement (**tinyurl.com/guard-bl-ow**)

Henry Goodsell

The remains of the captain of a merchant ship who died in a shipwreck off New Jersey in 1844 have been identified thanks to DNA testing (**tinyurl.com/popsci-goodsell**)

2,200

The number of items missing from the collections of the National Library of Wales, according to an investigation (**tinyurl.com/bbc-nlw-miss**)

Sandy Rodger

The East Sussex resident travelled to Edinburgh to collect documents from his father Ian's service in the Army during the Second World War, which a stranger found in a desk (**tinyurl.com/msn-rodger**)

This letter sent by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1332 held a vital clue

Researcher solves 1337 murder of priest

The murder of a medieval priest in the City of London was ordered by a noblewoman with whom he had an illicit affair, a criminologist has suggested.

Prof. Manuel Eisner of Cambridge University helped create Medieval Murder Maps (**medievalmurdermap.co.uk**), a website mapping medieval murder cases.

One of those was the death of John Forde, a priest who was stabbed to death in public by a gang of men in Cheapside, near St Paul's Cathedral.

Prof. Eisner has now uncovered a letter from 1332 sent by the Archbishop of Canterbury Simon Mepham to the Bishop of Winchester saying that Ela Fitzpayne, the wife of Sir Robert Fitzpayne, had been ordered to do penance after having sexual liaisons with a number of men.

Forde is the only one of her lovers named, suggesting that he was the one who told the bishop.

The criminalogist also found a 1322 report of Ela, John and Sir Robert leading a criminal gang to steal livestock from a priory.

Prof. Eisner believes that Ela ordered the "mafia-style assassination" as revenge for him revealing their affair.

GETTY IMAGES | CROWN COPYRIGHT

Midsummer Madness

Alan Crosby reveals our ancestors' wild summer celebrations in Tudor times

William Home and Robert Chamberlyn, the churchwardens of the parish of Wootton, near Woodstock in Oxfordshire, were summoned to appear at a church court in 1584. Their offence was that they had taken no action against "evell rule done in the churche by the Lord and Ladie on Midsomer day". The lord and lady referred to were not real people but the 'lord and lady of misrule', because Midsummer Day was one of those occasions when, by popular custom dating back centuries, the norms of behaviour and the hierarchical structure of society were suspended. Two locals (often apprentices) were chosen to preside over the anarchy and merrymaking, and for a day the world was turned upside down. This was often combined with processions led by the lord and lady in fanciful costumes, or with the 'lady' being a young man in drag.

The churchwardens stated in their own defence that, to the contrary, "there was no lord or ladie this yeare in Wootton parishe, but on Midsomer daye laste at evening prayer the youthe were sumwhat merrie together in crowninge of lords". It was a time of celebration for the young people, who crowned their chosen lords and ladies with garlands of flowers and leaves, and sang and danced in the long evening. A good time was had by all, and the fact that these scenes of disorder and popular festivities could take place in the church emphasises that this was an ancient custom. But now, in the 1580s, the authorities were trying to suppress such goings-on, mainly for fear that lively entertainment could get out of hand, and might be subversive, undermining the magistrates' authority, but also because such traditions were seen (quite correctly) as a hangover from the pre-Reformation Catholic Church.

The vicar got into a fight, fell down and tore the sleeve of his jerkin

Summertime was dangerous, from the point of view of those in authority, because the long, light evenings made it difficult to enforce a curfew. However, the Church itself might be far from blameless. At Charlton-on-Otmoor near Oxford in 1620 four men were accused of playing football at Midsummer, including no less a person than "Mr Garth", the vicar of Charlton. The witness confirmed that "Mr Garth was overtaken with drinck [so] that he did somtymes reele". He then got into a fight with a man called Mumford, fell down backwards and tore the sleeve of his jerkin. If that was how some of the clergy behaved, was it surprising that their flock might occasionally stray?

Midsummer Day, and the week or so on either side, was therefore a time of community celebration that surely went even further back into the past than the pre-Reformation Catholic Church. Marking the longest day of the year was a pre-Christian commemoration associated also with bringing greenery into churches. In 1505 at Bishop's Stortford in Hertfordshire the churchwardens paid 4d "for mowinge of grasse for the chirche agenst midsomer" and also paid for drink given to the men who carted the freshly cut grass into the church, filling it with the scent of the hay meadows.

In London the custom was to make "bonefiers in the streetes, every man bestowing wood or labour towards them; the wealthier sort also before their doores neare to the said bonefiers would set out tables… with sweete breade and good drinke… whereunto they would invite their neighbours and [passers-by] also to sit, and be merrie with them".

Midsummer – a time of street parties, bonfires, dancing, games, frivolity and merrymaking. Our forebears would think back on the year so far, and many of them would be anticipating the next couple of months of hard labour – bringing in the harvest, and doing all those other tasks to prepare for the winter. If the summer was cold and wet, the merriment would be much subdued – but in a fine year with warm sunshine and cloudless skies, midsummer was a time of joy.

ALAN CROSBY lives in Lancashire and is the editor of *The Local Historian*

ILLUSTRATION WWW.SUEGENT.COM

9 THINGS I'VE LEARNT FROM WORKING ON WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?®

Sara Khan, the genealogist behind dozens of *WDYTYA?* episodes, shares her favourite strategies for uncovering fascinating stories

Sara began working on *WDYTYA?* in 2006

The first series of *WDYTYA?* aired in 2004, and I started working on the programme two years later. My first episodes were broadcast in 2007 and featured rower Matthew Pinsent and actor John Hurt, and I'm afraid that I'm the one to blame for disproving John's supposed Irish heritage!

I had always been passionate about history, and after completing an MA in the subject I was keen to use my degree professionally. I found a job as a researcher at The National Archives in Kew (**nationalarchives.gov.uk**), where I was trained in TNA's wealth of genealogical and historical records. From there I was fortunate enough to join *WDYTYA?* in 2006, and although I left for a stint working in probate genealogy as an 'heir hunter' I rejoined the programme full time three years later, and have been working constantly since then.

I feel so lucky and privileged to have a career where I can indulge my love of all things historical and genealogical. All our family histories are so unique, and the researchers on the show are constantly uncovering new stories so there's always new historical moments to discover and learn about. The research always feels new and exciting.

I am involved from the very start of the process, meeting the celebrity as soon as they have expressed an interest in featuring in an episode. After the initial conversation, I then build up the family tree on all branches as far back as possible. I work closely with the research team who look in depth at emerging characters, and chase down records online or in archives. You never know where the story might go. For example, in the latest series nobody would ever have predicted broadcaster Mishal Husain's connection to the American War of Independence.

1 Reach Out To Distant Family

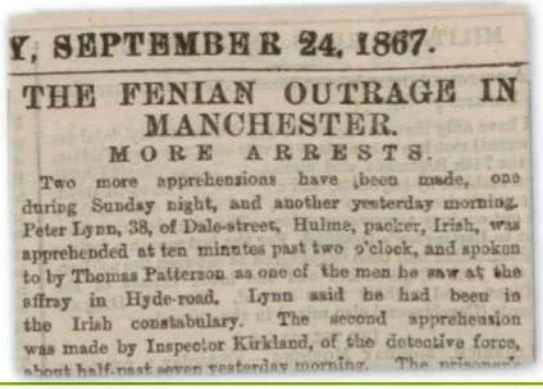
As well as building the tree backwards, it can also be beneficial to look for the extended family and trace forward distant cousins. Not only is it exciting to find 'new' living relatives, but they may also have extra information or documents relating to your mutual ancestors. On the show we regularly do this, and it often pays dividends. For example, in Mishal's episode we found lots of correspondence between her 4x great grandfather Joseph Swasey Farley and his siblings, and tracked down photos of her forebears including her great great grandfather Thomas Quinn and many of her Farley ancestors too.

2 Consult Local Experts And Archivists

As you build up your family tree, always pay attention to where your ancestors lived because you may find further records in local archives and repositories. This is another integral part of our research process on the show. Model Jerry Hall's episode is one such example. Although she was born in Texas, her great grandfather James Hall emigrated to the USA from Lancashire. After learning that James had worked in a cotton mill in Oldham, we were able to take Jerry to a local cotton mill so she could speak to historian Emma Griffin and understand what his working life entailed. We also carried out additional research in Oldham Local Studies and Archives (**hla.oldham.gov.uk/local-studies/**) to find more records, including sales deeds for James' house in 1881 – property deeds and titles are mostly held locally.

3 Check Regional Newspapers In Online Collections

As more and more local newspapers become available online, it is becoming easier to access these invaluable sources. They are the cornerstone of the research we conduct for all individuals on a tree, and we have uncovered a wealth of stories this way. For example, newspaper research led us to the story of actor Claire Foy's 3x great grandfather John Martin. John was born in Dublin but lived in Manchester, and became involved in the Fenian Movement which campaigned for Irish independence. In 1867 he was arrested for the murder of a policeman with his brother William, a case that was featured heavily in the local press.

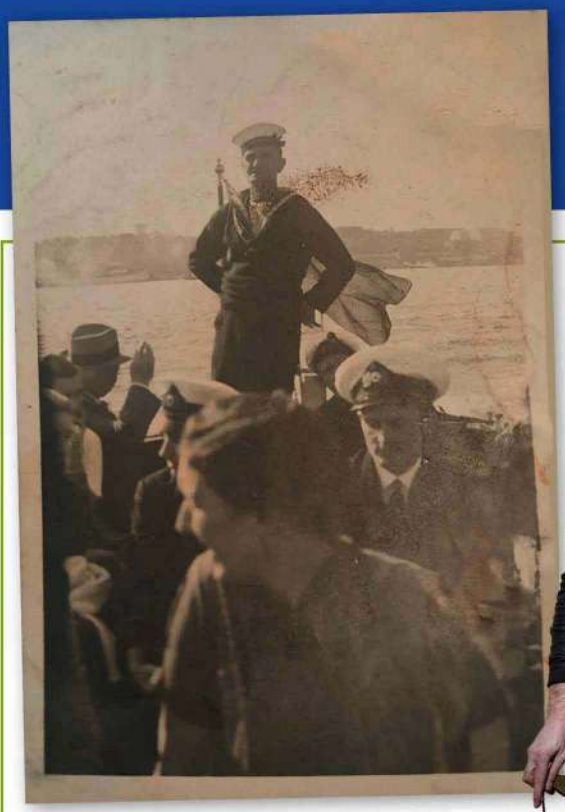


Y, SEPTEMBER 24, 1867.

THE FENIAN OUTRAGE IN MANCHESTER.

MORE ARRESTS.

Two more apprehensions have been made, one during Sunday night, and another yesterday morning. Peter Lynn, 38, of Dale-street, Hulme, packer, Irish, was apprehended at ten minutes past two o'clock, and spoken to by Thomas Patterson as one of the men he saw at the affray in Hyde-road. Lynn said he had been in the Irish constabulary. The second apprehension was made by Inspector Kirkland, of the detective force, about half-past seven yesterday morning. The prisoner's



4 Obtain Military And Occupational Records If Possible

Historically the UK has had a very big military presence globally, thanks in large part to the need to maintain the British Empire. Of course, the 20th century saw Britain fight in two world wars as well. This means that many trees will include an ancestor with a military background. Actor Ross Kemp, who starred in the most recent series, grew up hearing stories about his maternal great grandfather Arthur Chalmers, known as 'Pop', who had a long career at sea, working in both the Royal Navy and later the Merchant Navy. We obtained service records for Pop for his time in both navies, which are now mostly available online, and were able to confirm the family story that he had been involved in a shipwreck. In 1943 Pop's ship the *Duchess of York* had been badly damaged when it was bombed by the Luftwaffe. Luckily he was one of the survivors, and was taken to Casablanca in Morocco.

5 Search The Web For Ancestors' Names

Although so many records are now available digitally on dedicated genealogical websites, it is always worth doing a general web search for each of the names on your family tree. You never know what information might have been published online about them, and this is how we first uncovered actor Danny Dyer's connection to royalty. We Googled relations from the Gosnold part of Danny's tree, and struck gold by finding a mention of a Rev. Lionel Gosnold in an entry in Burke's Peerage that linked him back to Edward III (**fiskeharrisonfamily.wordpress.com/2011/07/29/burkes-fiske-harrison-family**). We were then able to verify the information, and connect Danny to the Plantagenets.

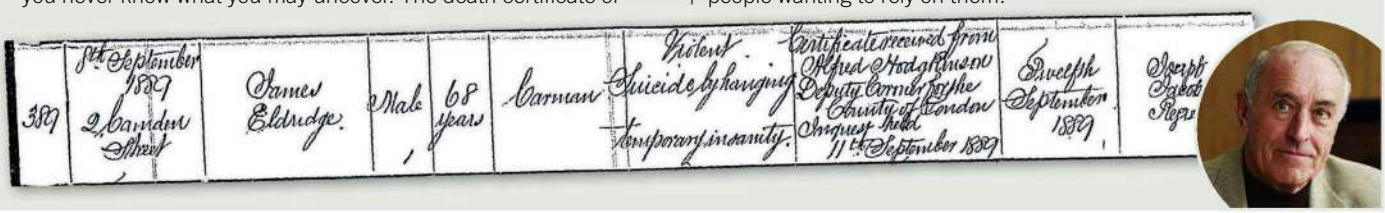
6 Always Track Down Institutional Records

It was not uncommon for our ancestors to spend time in hospitals, asylums and – from the 19th century onwards – the dreaded workhouses too. You may come across this when finding individuals in census returns. It's a good idea to look for any further records of their time in such places. Some workhouse records are online, otherwise they will be available in local archives. Actor Brian Blessed's episode saw him uncover a riches-to-rags story involving his great grandfather Jabez Blessed using workhouse records. Jabez began life as a workhouse orphan following the death of his parents; his father Barnabas had lost his job as a bookbinder in London, and ended up as a pauper.

The airing yard of St Marylebone Workhouse, c1901

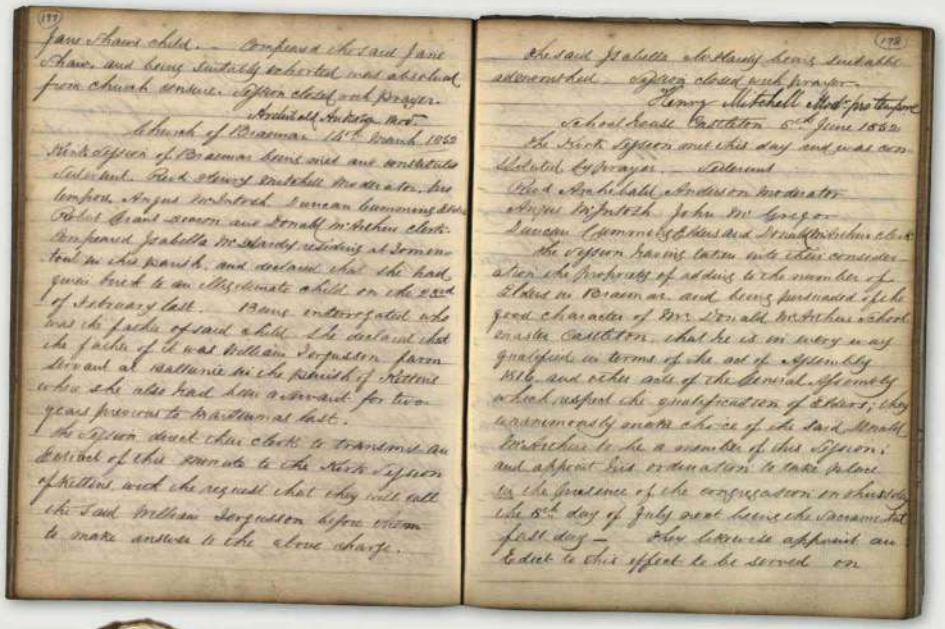
7 Remember To Source Death Records

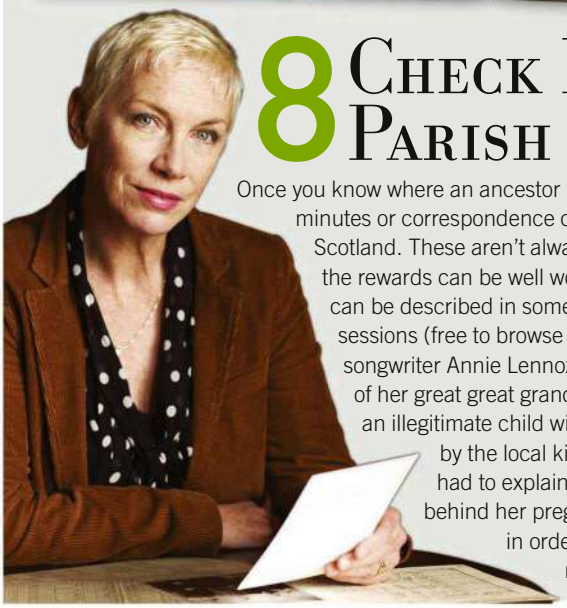
The digitisation of many General Record Office records (**www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/**) along with the reduction in the cost of ordering, as well as the widespread availability of online indexes, are making death records increasingly accessible. It's always worth looking for such records for your ancestors, because you never know what you may uncover. The death certificate of *Strictly Come Dancing* head judge Len Goodman's great great grandfather led us to his tragic suicide in 1889. Poor James Eldridge ended his life because he had such a fear of having to go to the workhouse in Bethnal Green, East London – the conditions in workhouses were designed to be as harsh as possible to prevent people wanting to rely on them.



387	9th September 1889 2 Camden Street	James Eldridge.	Male	68 years	Carman	Suicide by hanging temporary insanity.	Verdict. Certificate received from Alfred Hodgkinson Deputy Coroner for the City of London Inquest held 11th September 1889	Twelfth September 1889	Joseph Jacob Rogers

GETTY IMAGES





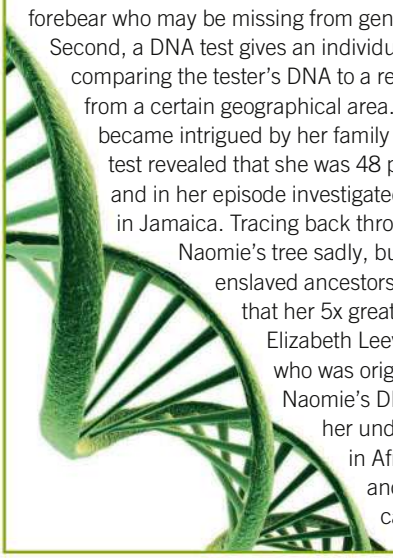
8 Check Local Parish Records

Once you know where an ancestor lived, it can pay off to go through the minutes or correspondence created by the local parish, or kirk in Scotland. These aren't always indexed so it requires patience, but the rewards can be well worth the effort and your forebears' lives can be described in some depth. We delved into the records of kirk sessions (free to browse on **scotlandspeople.gov.uk**) for singer–songwriter Annie Lennox's episode when we looked into the life of her great great grandmother, Isabella McHardy. Isabella had an illegitimate child with William Ferguson, and was summoned by the local kirk in Braemar, Aberdeenshire. Isabella had to explain to the church elders the circumstances behind her pregnancy and that the father was William, in order for the kirk to make him financially responsible for their child.

9 Take A DNA Test

DNA testing is becoming increasingly useful in genealogical research, for two main reasons. First, DNA tests can help you break down brick walls when trying to identify a grandparent or other ancestor. As more and more people take these tests and upload their results to online databases, it's becoming easier to find near or distant cousins and thereby uncover a common forebear who may be missing from genealogical records.

Second, a DNA test gives an individual's ethnic origin by comparing the tester's DNA to a reference population from a certain geographical area. Actor Naomie Harris became intrigued by her family history after a DNA test revealed that she was 48 per cent Nigerian, and in her episode investigated her mother's family in Jamaica. Tracing back through the generations Naomie's tree sadly, but inevitably, led her to enslaved ancestors. Naomie discovered that her 5x great grandmother Elizabeth Leevers was a slave who was originally from Africa. Naomie's DNA test helped her understand where in Africa her ancestors first came from.



GETTY IMAGES/ CROWN COPYRIGHT, NATIONAL RECORDS OF SCOTLAND

10 Essential Websites

ANCESTRY
w **ancestry.co.uk**
Ancestry has a huge database of records, the largest DNA database plus user-submitted family trees.

BRITISH NEWSPAPER ARCHIVE
w **britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**
BNA contains a vast collection of local and national titles.

DISCOVERY
w **discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**
You can search The National Archives' collections here.

FAMILYSEARCH
w **familysearch.org**
This free site is the biggest source of records from around the globe.

FINDMYPAST
w **findmypast.co.uk**
Findmypast has extensive records from outside the UK.

FREEBMD
w **freebmd.org.uk**
View transcribed civil records of birth, marriage and death in England and Wales for free.

IRISH GENEALOGY
w **irishgenealogy.ie**
The Irish government's free site features civil and church records.

NEWSPAPERS.COM
w **newspapers.com**
This site has a very international collection including the USA, Canada, Australia and Ireland.

SCOTLAND'S PEOPLE
w **scotlandspeople.gov.uk**
The Scottish government's site includes civil, census, parish and kirk records, wills and land records.

THEGENEALOGIST
w **thegenealogist.co.uk**
As well as the main records for the UK, and the US census, this site has a tool allowing you to search census entries by occupation.

This orphaned boy survived a Luftwaffe attack on London in 1944

Death by Doodlebug

The UK suffered an onslaught of flying-bomb attacks in the Second World War including a catastrophic incident on 18 June 1944, says **Jan Gore**

Sunday 18 June 1944 was a fine day. The morning service at the Royal Military Chapel (the Guards' Chapel) in Birdcage Walk in the City of Westminster, Central London, was officially commemorating the Battle of Waterloo, fought on the same day in 1815, as it did every year. On this occasion, the service also presented an unofficial opportunity for the congregation to give thanks for the success of the Normandy landings on D-Day 12 days earlier.

It was also the first weekend of the Luftwaffe's V1 campaign. Flying bombs had begun to reach southern England from occupied France, and were starting to arrive in ever-increasing numbers. However, until that Sunday morning, none of them had reached Westminster.

The chapel was and is the religious home of the British Army's Household Division, including the Royal Guardsmen based at the Wellington Barracks. The guardsmen arrived for church parade. Many people attended morning service each week, while others came just to hear the music. Nurses would attend if off duty, and places were reserved for them. Families attended together, with mothers and daughters coming to pray for the safety of loved ones serving overseas.

Victims In Waiting

Those present that day included the Band of the Coldstream Guards, led by the director of music, Major James Causley Windram; Lord Edward Hay, commanding officer of the Westminster Garrison Battalion; Lieutenant Colonel Ivan Cobbold; US Army colonel Gustav Guenther; the officiating chaplain Rev. Ralph Whitrow; as well as several members of the Women's Royal Naval Service, the Auxiliary Territorial Service and nurses. Three friends of my mother, whom she met staying at a Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) hostel in Earl's Court, were also there, drawn by the music and the spectacle, although she chose to

GETTY IMAGES

This particular V1 was restored by the Smithsonian for display in the 1970s

stay behind to revise for university exams. The congregation was a microcosm of society.

At 11 o'clock the doors were closed, and the service began.

Lord Hay was finishing reading the first lesson when the congregation heard the distinctive sound of an approaching V1. Everyone hoped it would continue on its way, but it got louder. Lord Hay left the lectern, and the congregation began to sing the hymn the *Te Deum*; the musicians of the Coldstream Guards Band started to play in the gallery.

Guardsman Keith Lewis described the scene in later life. The flying bomb's engine noise became deafening then suddenly stopped. A large semi-circular area at the top of the south wall collapsed; there was an intensive blue flash, followed by a very loud explosion. Then a chunk of the wall disappeared, and the concrete roof and most of the side walls crashed down on the congregation, leaving more than 10 feet of rubble. It would be three hours before he was rescued.

Elisabeth Sheppard-Jones was standing towards the back of the chapel. In her autobiography *I Walk on Wheels* (Geoffrey Bles, 1958) she wrote, "The Guards' Chapel collapsed upon us in a bellow of bricks and mortar. There was not time for panic… One moment I was singing the *Te Deum* and the next I lay in dust and blackness, aware of one thing only – that I had to go on breathing." She would never walk again.

The Air Raid Precautions chief warden was quick to arrive; he phoned for heavy- and light-rescue parties, mobile cranes and ambulances. The heavy-rescue parties were on the scene within eight minutes, and began to extricate the casualties from the rubble. Rescue operations continued for over 48 hours. Meanwhile the Women's Voluntary Service set up an incident enquiry point at the barracks, where they could field enquiries from relatives and friends about those missing.

The final death toll was 124, consisting of 65 members of the military and 59 civilians, with 121 dying at the scene or later that day in hospital. One guardsman died of his injuries the following spring, and one female civilian victim was never identified. About 140 people were injured, many seriously. The fatalities included Major Windram, six of his musicians and my mother's three friends from the YWCA. This was the worst V1 incident of the war.

A week after D-Day, Hitler gave orders to start the V1 campaign

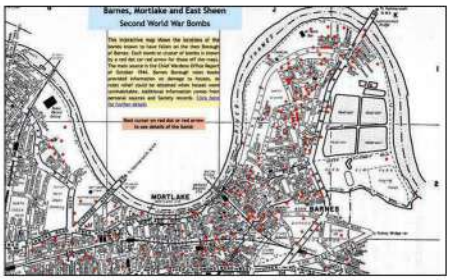
Since February 1942 the Luftwaffe had been working on the V1 flying bomb, a pilotless plane launched from a catapult ramp and equipped with a jet engine. A crude guidance system would fly the V1 on a preset path until it ran out of fuel; then the engine would cut out and about 15 seconds later the V1 would crash to the ground and explode. It could be launched by day or night, with no need for a pilot or favourable weather.

At The Führer's Command

A week after D-Day, Hitler gave orders to start the V1 campaign. In the early hours of 13 June no fewer than 10 V1s were launched, of which four reached England. Three caused local damage but ▶

Bomb-Survey Maps

Jan shares three websites for viewing bombing maps from WW2



Barnes, Mortlake And East Sheen Second World War Bombs

w **tinyurl.com/barnes-history-bombs**

The Barnes and Mortlake History Society's site includes this detailed interactive map.

Layers Of London

w **layersoflondon.org**

Here you can find photos, stories, memories and historic maps including the London County Council Bomb Damage Maps.

Portsmouth Bomb Map

w **tinyurl.com/ports-mus-bombs**

Portsmouth Museum and Art Gallery's site has this map showing where high-explosive bombs fell on the city during 1940–1944.

GETTY IMAGES

the fourth hit a railway bridge in East London, killing six people and disrupting rail services.

By noon on Friday 16 June, 73 V1s had reached Greater London. There was a statement in the House of Commons, which said that a new weapon was being used, a pilotless aircraft.

That weekend was the worst of the campaign. There was a news embargo, but Londoners could see the damage for themselves. By Monday 19 June, 499 people had died and 2,051 were in hospital with serious injuries.

Soon there were new plans to evacuate women and children. By 17 July, 170,000 had left; the eventual figure was over a million. Londoners began to sleep in the Tube at night again, as they had during the Blitz. By now the southern counties were also being hit by hundreds of V1s. The gun batteries were redeployed to the coast in a change of strategy, and their hit rate reached 74 per cent by the end of August.

As the Allies broke out of Normandy, the Germans began to move to Holland and started to develop an increased reliance on V1s that were launched from the air over the North Sea after being suspended under modified Heinkel bombers.

Traumatic Memories

'Doodlebugs' were now coming over by day and night. Many people still have vivid memories of the noise of a doodlebug overhead, followed by the equally chilling silence as the engine cut out. Although countless doodlebugs were shot down, they of course still caused casualties wherever they fell.

There had been 350 air-launched sorties since the start of July. August was even more challenging. Although up to 50 per cent of V1s were destroyed before reaching London, large numbers were still making it to the capital. By now the Allies were moving into the Netherlands, capturing and destroying the launching sites. However, the Germans were still able to send air-launched V1s.

On 6 September the Government announced the latest figures. V1s had killed 5,817 people, and injured almost 40,000. Of 8,905 flying bombs launched, 2,337 had reached London, killing 5,381, and wounding more than 34,000. The following day, the minister of works Duncan Sandys, chairman of the War Cabinet's Flying Bomb Counter Measures Committee, announced, "Except possibly for a few last shots, the Battle for London is over… we have beaten… the V1."

Sadly, this was not true. On 8 September the first V2 rocket hit Chiswick, West London, killing four people. Until March 1945 England would be subject to attacks by both V1s and V2s.

Meanwhile the Luftwaffe reorganised its air launches, targeting locations further north. V1s remained a continuing threat throughout October; 282 flying bombs were launched that month.

November 1944 was the

Rescue workers arrive at the scene of a V1 explosion in the City of London, 15 July 1944

V1 Campaign Timeline

Jan outlines the main events of the Luftwaffe's V1 bombing campaign which brought terror to our relations on the home front

1942

February
German engineers Robert Lusser and Fritz Gosslau start to design a pilotless plane.

June
The project is approved by the Luftwaffe and flight tests begin at Peenemünde in north-east Germany.

1944

June
The first V1s are launched against the UK on 13 June, killing 499 and seriously injuring more than 2,000 in the first week alone.

July
As attacks continue to escalate women and children start to be evacuated from London on 3 July.

August
The Luftwaffe increasingly launches V1s from the air as the Allies capture launch sites in France.

GETTY IMAGES

busiest month of the air-launch campaign, and the V1s were starting to include propaganda leaflets. Records suggest that 316 V1s were launched on just 13 nights in November, with another 90 between 1 and 13 December. Some were shot down over the sea, while others were hit by anti-aircraft fire.

The Luftwaffe decided on a last desperate attempt to cause alarm and despondency. In the early hours of 24 December up to 45 Heinkels took off, each armed with a V1, aiming for Manchester; 31 V1s made landfall, of which 15 fell in the Manchester area and the rest over a wide area of northern and north-west England, with a death toll of about 50 and more than 100 seriously injured. There was disbelief and shock, since V1s had never reached that area before.

Now lack of fuel was becoming a major problem for the V1s. The final raids were in mid-January, with 36 people killed in London and 75 injured.

The Luftwaffe decided to redesign the ramp-launched V1s to increase their range from 150 miles to 200. This took until late February, and the attacks started again on 2 March 1945. There were two notable hits. One, on the Royal Army Ordnance Depot in Northolt, north-west London, killed 14 and injured more than 110. The other killed 14 in Dartford, Kent, and narrowly missed the infant Rolling Stone Keith Richards. The final V1 was shot down off Orford Ness on the Suffolk coast on 29 March.

Counting The Cost

During a campaign from mid-June 1944 to 29 March 1945, more than 10,400 V1s were launched against the UK. It's thought that 9,251 were fired against London, and some 2,320 hit the city, killing 5,582 people. The death toll extended far beyond what is often termed the 10-week 'Doodlebug Summer' of mid-June to late August 1944. The flying bombs were a terror weapon and an indiscriminate one, lacking in accuracy but good value for money in terms of lives lost and damage caused. Also, maybe as many as 20,000 died from the slave labour involved in the bombs' construction, more than the civilians that they killed – a contrast too often ignored.

JAN GORE is a researcher and social historian, and author of *The V1 Flying Bomb Campaign 1944–1945: the Doodlebug Summer and After* (Pen & Sword, 2024)

GETTY IMAGES

September
On 7 September minister Duncan Sandys announces, "The Battle for London is over… we have beaten… the V1." This proves premature.

December
Unexpected raids hit a wide area of northern and north-west England on Christmas Eve. Roughly 50 people are killed.

1945

January
The Luftwaffe ends V1 raids on 13/14 January because of a shortage of fuel.

March
Redesigned V1s start to attack again on 2 March. On 29 March the last V1 launched against the UK is shot down off Orford Ness on the coast of Suffolk.

Resources

Take your research further

ARCHIVES

THE LONDON ARCHIVES

a **40 Northampton Road, London EC1R 0HB**
t 020 7332 3820
w **thelondonarchives.org/blog/second-world-war-bomb-damage-maps-of-london**

At TLA you can consult copies of the Bomb Damage Maps of London, and read air-raid reports. Highlights of its exhibition 'London in the Second World War', which ends on 30 October, are available at **tinyurl.com/tla-london-ww2**.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

a **Kew, Richmond TW9 4DU**
t 020 8876 3444
w **nationalarchives.gov.uk**

The relevant material at TNA includes 'Flying Bombs: List of Incidents' (reference AIR 20/4128) and 'Air Raids, Major and Minor Bomb Incidents: Reports, 1939–1945' (HO 186/2360), although neither are digitised. The website's excellent research guides include one for the Second World War Bomb Census Survey at **tinyurl.com/tna-guide-bomb-census**.

BOOKS

Doodlebugs and Rockets: the Battle of the Flying Bombs
Bob Ogley
Froglets Publications, 1992
This lavishly illustrated account includes personal recollections.

The Doodlebugs: the Story of the Flying-Bombs
Norman Longmate
Hutchinson, 1981
The definitive work on the period is full of anecdotes and fascinating details. The book can be borrowed for free from the Internet Archive at **tinyurl.com/arch-doodle-story**.

Wartime: Britain 1939–1945
Juliet Gardiner
Headline, 2004
This excellent account sets the raids in context and gives you a general background. It can also be borrowed from the Internet Archive via **tinyurl.com/arch-war-gard**.

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?®

TRY A ONE MONTH

FREE TRIAL

To the digital edition

Tap here for your **FREE TRIAL**

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google play

If you love family history, then why not have *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine*, the UK's best-selling family history magazine publication, delivered straight to your computer, tablet or smartphone? With a digital subscription to *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine* you can enjoy our easy-to-follow advice and news of the latest online releases wherever you are.

Have *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine* Delivered Straight To Your Device

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google play

Simply Tap The Logo Below To Try A Free Trial To The Digital Edition

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

'My Mother's Family Survived The German Occupation Of Jersey'

CELEBRATING YOUR DISCOVERIES

When Sarah Le Marchand began researching her Jersey relations' experiences during the Second World War, she found irresistible inspiration for a novel says **Claire Vaughan**

Yorkshire-born Sarah Le Marchand has a clear memory of walking along the sea wall at Beaumont in the Channel Island of Jersey as a teenager with her older cousin Chris. Her mother's family, the Boléats, had lived through the German Occupation of the island during the Second World War. "Chris explained to me that when the Russian slave workers were building the wall, if one of them died – from illness, malnutrition or mistreatment – then their bodies would be tipped into the liquid concrete to dispose of them. I was horrified, and that story has stayed with me."

In fact, the former English teacher, who lives in Worcester, was so moved by the tales of her family's wartime experiences that she drew on them for her novel *Hold Fast* (The Book Guild, 2025), which features a fictional Jersey family called Le Bretons.

"I've always been interested in the occupation of the Channel Islands," Sarah says, "and fascinated by my mother's stories of how she and her parents and six siblings managed to survive those difficult times."

The notes that my mother made were the starting point for my research

The Boléat family in 1929: Cecile and Yvonne *(back)*, Hélène, Cecile, Emile and Paul *(middle)*, and *(front)* Milo and Marguerite

UNP/ADAM FRADGLEY

Sarah's mother Marguerite (Margo) Sanderson (née Boléat) was born in St Clement, Jersey, in 1924 to Emile Joseph Boléat and his wife Cecile (née Samson). Marguerite had six siblings: Cecile (born 1917), Yvonne (1919), Paul (1921), Hélène (1923), Emile ('Milo', 1927) and Maurice (1930).

The research of another cousin, Mark, had uncovered the Boléats' origins. Emile Joseph Boléat was born in 1893 to Yves Marie Boléat and Augustine (née Lhermitte), one of five children. On the 1891 and 1901 censuses of Jersey, Yves was a farmer living at St Clement, born in the commune of Trégrom, Brittany, north-west France. Yves' application to become a British citizen stated that he'd arrived in Jersey in April 1875. He and his brother Joseph Marie came over together, part of the large exodus of Breton labourers leaving France in the late 19th century in search of a better life. Mark traced the family back to Yvon Boléat, born 1656 in the commune of Plufur, Brittany: "The direct ancestor of all today's Boléats."

But it was Marguerite's handwritten recollections about the Occupation that were the catalyst for Sarah's novel.

The Widow's Return

"After my father died in 2003, my mother returned to live in Jersey, having left the island after the Occupation to train to be a nurse in Bristol. She bought a house in the same lane as 'Rocklands', her childhood family home in St Clement. Being back in Jersey made her think about the past, and she decided to write a memoir about her life." Unfortunately, she passed away before she was able to write more than a series of notes – many of them illegible – in a now-scruffy red exercise book.

"We found it among her papers after she died in 2015. It's one of my most treasured possessions. The notes that she made were the starting point for my research."

Marguerite was just 16 when the Germans arrived in summer 1940. In mid-June, following the Allies' defeat in the Battle of France, the British government decided to end its defence of the ▶

Sarah Le Marchand's Family Tree

- Yvon Boléat, born 1656
  - Joseph Marie Boléat, 1865–1911
  - Yves Marie Boléat, 1853–1917 ═ Augustine Lhermitte, 1863–1944
    - Three Siblings
    - Emile Joseph Boléat, 1893–1970 ═ Cecile Samson, 1888–1970
      - Cecile Boléat, 1917–1990
      - Bernard Perrée, 1918–1988 ═ Yvonne Boléat, 1919–2003
        - One Sibling
        - Christopher Perrée, born 1950
      - Paul Boléat, 1921–2019 ═ Edith (Peggy) Still, 1922–2014
        - Two Siblings
        - Mark Boléat, born 1949
      - Arthur Pinel, 1920–1980 ═ Hélène Boléat, 1923–2021
      - Philip Sanderson, 1923–2003 ═ Marguerite (Margo) Boléat, 1924–2015
        - Stephan Le Marchand, born 1957 ═ Sarah Hélène Sanderson, born 1959
        - Three Siblings
      - Emile (Milo) Boléat, 1927–2000
        - Michael Boléat, 1958–1999
        - One Sibling
      - Maurice Boléat, 1930–2015
    - Jean Ernest Boléat, 1896–1949 ═ Lizzie Emma (Emmie) Tolcher, 1897–1991

This photograph from 13 May 1945 shows the people of Jersey celebrating their liberation

Channel Islands and pulled its troops out. "On 28 June, German planes swept across the island dropping bombs and machine-gunning civilians. An ultimatum for surrender was communicated by messages being dropped early in the morning of 1 July with the demand for white flags to be displayed on all buildings. In the afternoon, German troops landed at the airport and the handover to Hauptmann Gussek, the commandant, was completed."

The island's government remained in place, controlled by the German forces. Many local businesses were closed down, and residents were forced to work for the enemy. Some of the islanders were accused of collaboration, but life was tough and they had to survive.

The Germans banned radios, access to medicines, and meetings of more than three people; restricted the use of boats and motor vehicles; and introduced censorship, identity cards and curfews.

The most shocking thing was the Germans' brutality towards the foreign workers

Life became harsher as deportations to concentration camps increased and supplies diminished. The winter of 1944/1945 was desperate, with many islanders only surviving due to the arrival of Red Cross food parcels. It was hard to fight the invaders openly, but there were many pockets of resistance.

"The most shocking thing that I discovered was the Germans' brutality towards the foreign workers sent to Jersey to work on fortifications, gun emplacements and a huge underground hospital. I was also unaware of the ways Jersey people tried to help them."

There were about 16,000 slave workers in the Channel Islands – many were Russians from the Ukraine, but there were also Jews, Poles, Spanish Republicans, North Africans and French among others. In Jersey, the workers were housed in 13 camps, where they suffered terrible working and living conditions: starved, beaten, tortured and in some cases killed.

Sarah's maternal grandparents married in 1917

Wartime Diary

Sarah did a huge amount of research, reading occupation diaries including *The German Occupation of Jersey: A Complete Diary of Events from June 1940 to June 1945* by journalist Leslie Sinel, published by the *Jersey Evening Post* in 1945 (a 1969 edition can be borrowed for free from the Internet Archive via **tinyurl.com/arch-sinel**). However, the eyewitness accounts from members of Sarah's own family were central to the novel.

In 2020, she talked to her Aunt Hélène. Aged 97, she was the only one of Sarah's mother's siblings still alive, and died the following year. "Many of her memories developed my understanding of what the Boléats lived through."

Hélène talked about the lack of supplies, how they survived when faced with possible starvation, and what they did when the Germans demanded the precious food they had grown.

"Potatoes and tomatoes, among other fruit and vegetables, were grown by my grandfather Emile. The family would put the worst of their crops at the bottom of the barrels they handed over."

In 1941/1942, Hitler ordered that anyone not born in Jersey should be removed. "Hélène's boyfriend Arthur was due to be deported to Germany. They said their goodbyes, and he went to the harbour as instructed." As luck would have it, there was not enough room on the boats assigned and he returned home. The couple married in 1946.

Sarah's Aunt Edith, known as Peggy, was 18 when the Germans arrived. "She was in hospital being treated for tuberculosis of the hip joints. She was immobilised – encased in a plaster-of-Paris shell – for nearly two years. While she was hospitalised, her father,

GETTY IMAGES

Sarah's parents Philip Sanderson and Marguerite Boléat got married in 1956

stepmother and brother were deported to a camp in Germany because Ruby, her stepmother, had Jewish ancestry and her father, born in England, was an ex-Army officer.

"Her bravery and the care of her family and friends allowed her to get through a traumatic time. I didn't know the details until I read her memoir *A Quiet Place* (Villette Publishing, 1993) many years later," says Sarah. Peggy's family returned to Jersey when the war was over.

"My mother's and Aunt Hélène's accounts make me feel immensely proud of them and the family's ability to 'keep calm and carry on'. The seven siblings also engaged in small acts of defiance, among them swimming into Le Hocq Bay to retrieve a sack of flour that had fallen from a crashed plane, painting V signs on roads, and hiding a banned crystal radio set in one of the brothers' beds, who pretended he had an infectious illness when their house was searched." The Le Bretons in *Hold Fast* undertake their own act of defiance in hiding Konstantin, an escaped Russian prisoner.

Harsh Punishment

All of these actions could have led to imprisonment or deportation. Records released by the Jersey Archive (**jerseyheritage.org/visit/places-to-visit/jersey-archive**) reveal how harshly defiant islanders were punished. More than 500, some as young as 14, were taken into custody for relatively minor offences such as listening to the radio or breaking curfew. These included two schoolgirls – 15-year-old Kathleen Duckworth and 14-year-old Beryl Wickings – convicted of unspecified political activities, and 15-year-old Marcel Auger, whose conviction for theft saw him held for three months.

The stakes were high. Louisa Gould, a shopkeeper, was caught sheltering a Russian prisoner. She was arrested and sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp, where she died. However, some did evade the Germans, including Bob Le Sueur, a 19-year-old clerk when the Occupation began. He helped eight or nine escaped Russian prisoners, setting up safehouses around Jersey.

"My research has led me to a much greater appreciation of my family's suffering, and their ability to endure while holding fast to their principles and their courage. Writing the novel has been a journey of discovery, not only in what I found out about my family, but in what I uncovered about the Occupation."

As far as it's possible to know, there's no evidence of dead Russians being entombed in the concrete of Jersey's sea wall. But whatever the truth, the island's fortifications stand as a moving monument to the suffering of all of those who were brutalised during the Occupation.

TELL YOUR STORY

Share your family story with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*

Sarah's novel was published by The Book Guild on 28 March (RRP £9.99)

Resources

These resources helped Sarah explore her family's experiences

ARCHIVE

Jersey Archive

a Clarence Road, St Helier JE2 4JY
t 01534 833300
w **jerseyheritage.org/visit/places-to-visit/jersey-archive**

Here you'll find records of every aspect of the island's history, including the Occupation, and key resources – from civil registers of birth, marriage and death (civil registration started in 1842 in Jersey), censuses and parish records to school, hospital and prison registers. Occupation registration cards held here contain personal details: name, address and date of birth, with many also including a photo of the bearer. Advice can be found at **jerseyheritage.org/research-and-collections/family-history-research/**, and many records are available in digital format via **catalogue.jerseyheritage.org**.

ARTICLE

The Goodness of Strangers: Help to Escaped Russian Slave Labourers in Occupied Jersey 1942–1945

Louise Willmot
Contemporary European History Vol. 11 No. 2, 2002

This journal article helped Sarah understand a little-known part of Jersey's history. It can be read for free via the digital library JSTOR at **tinyurl.com/jstor-good-strangers**, although you will need to create an account.

FAMILY STUDY

The Jersey Boléat Family

w **boleat.com/the_boleat_genealogy/**

The work of other family historians can give your own investigations a huge boost, as Sarah discovered when she read her cousin Mark's findings into their shared heritage. However, you should always double-check other researchers' conclusions.

Research After 1945

Janet Few outlines the challenges of tracing relations in the latter half of the 20th century, and shares her expert tips for overcoming them

Two women in 1954 enjoying donkey rides on Blackpool beach

GETTY IMAGES

To some of us, post-1945 seems like yesterday – but if you are a younger researcher, this era could encompass several generations of your ancestors. More recent research is an important part of everyone's family history. Even if we feel that the family members are well known to us, it is crucial to give them as much attention as our earlier relations. Although more recent research is easier in some ways, we can be hampered by the increasing mobility of our relatives and records that are closed to the public for reasons of privacy. We can continue to use some sources from earlier eras – civil registration records, wills and memorial inscriptions, to name just a few – but other fundamental records, such as the highly informative census returns, are just not available.

Your most valuable resource for more recent research is your living relations. Make sure that you have made full use of them, including more distant relatives. What memories, documents, photographs and artefacts might they have that would help you to better understand your family's history? Non-relatives may be useful too. Former neighbours, schoolmates and colleagues can be valuable sources of information. A photograph of your grandparent may lurk in the family album of someone whose past that they shared.

A nurse at a health centre in Lawrence Weston, Bristol, weighs a baby girl, c1950

Look for local-history societies too, which may have archives of photographs and reminiscences. The British Association for Local History (**balh.org.uk**) can help you locate these. There are also Facebook Groups that share the history of particular locations, schools and workplaces. In this way, I was sent a photograph of my first schoolteacher. Note that school and university records themselves are not always obtainable for this period because of privacy reasons, but there may be old school magazines or alumni associations that can be accessed by contacting the institution, or found online.

Electoral Rolls

The 1928 Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act had finally given women electoral equality with men, and the minimum voting age dropped from 21 to 18 in 1969. Electoral rolls might be available in local archives or council offices, but are also appearing on genealogical records websites such as Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) and Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**) in increasing numbers. Ancestry's London electoral registers boasts over 200 million records up to the early 1970s. Other large collections cover Aberdeen, Liverpool and West Yorkshire and the company has just added 12.6 million records for Buckinghamshire. There is also a UK-wide collection of electoral registers covering 2011-2018. Findmypast ▶

Expert Picks

Janet recommends these online resources for researching the period

Ancestry

w **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/1025**

There are fewer street directories available for the period, but more people had telephones and Ancestry has British phone books.

British Newspaper Archive

w **britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**

Find birth, marriage and death notices, and other events. Findmypast subscribers at the 'Everything' level can use the collection too.

National Library Of Scotland Maps

w **maps.nls.uk**

This free site contains historic maps to help you understand ancestral areas, including Ordnance Survey maps of the 1970s.

GETTY IMAGES

also has a collection of 130 million records from a 192.com database dating from 2002 which includes both electoral registers and Companies House directors. If you find a home address, you can pay a virtual visit using Google Street View (**google.com/streetview/**).

The postwar period brought with it increasing leisure time. This means that records of clubs and societies might include references to your ancestors. Did Granny belong to the Women's Institute? Was Grandad a member of the local cricket club? Were your family involved in community life as parish councillors, churchwardens or school governors? Try local repositories and the organisations themselves, if they still survive, for records such as minute books. Meetings and events might also be reported in local newspapers, so try the British Newspaper Archive (**britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**). The National Federation of Women's Institutes' records are held by the London School of Economics and Political Science (see the LSE's online catalogue at **archives.lse.ac.uk/records/5FWI**), and many local groups have deposited records in county archives.

Some records from the 1970s are starting to come online, making it easier to research family from that period

DID YOU KNOW?

The Internet Archive holds Medical Officer of Health reports, containing details of historic living conditions and public-health concerns: **tinyurl.com/arch-moh**.

Burial Records

Cemetery burials and cremations were replacing church burials in increasing numbers by the late 20th century, and their records can be accessed via the appropriate local authority, or the cemetery or crematorium itself. Cemetery registers may tell you who shares the same grave, or when the plot was purchased. Some of these records are finding their way online. For example, there is an index to cremations in Leeds (1938–1969) on Findmypast while Oldham cemetery registers up to 2004 appear, with images, on both Findmypast and Ancestry. An index to Tameside and Birmingham cemetery and crematoria records including records as late as 2017 can be found on Ancestry. Many burial and cremation records can be accessed via Deceased Online too (**deceasedonline.com**).

In addition, you may be able to make use of employment records. Are company newsletters or magazines available? Was your ancestor a member of a professional association or trade union? The Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick (**warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/**) holds many original records, and you can find a collection of 257 volumes of trade-union records on Findmypast. The National Library of Scotland has extensive records for Scottish

Percy James Woolgar 1891–1963

Janet reveals how she researched her great uncle

Percy Woolgar was not famous; he has no living descendants. He was my great uncle, and died when I was a child. What could I piece together about his life from post-1945 sources? First, my mother provided many family memories and anecdotes. I learnt about his love of singing; he was a member of several choirs. He was also a dog owner, and the dogs feature in some of the photographs I have of him. Mining the family archive turned up several postcards that he sent to relations, revealing that he spent his holidays in Bridgerule, on the border between Devon and Cornwall, in a bed-and-breakfast run by Gladys Bowden.

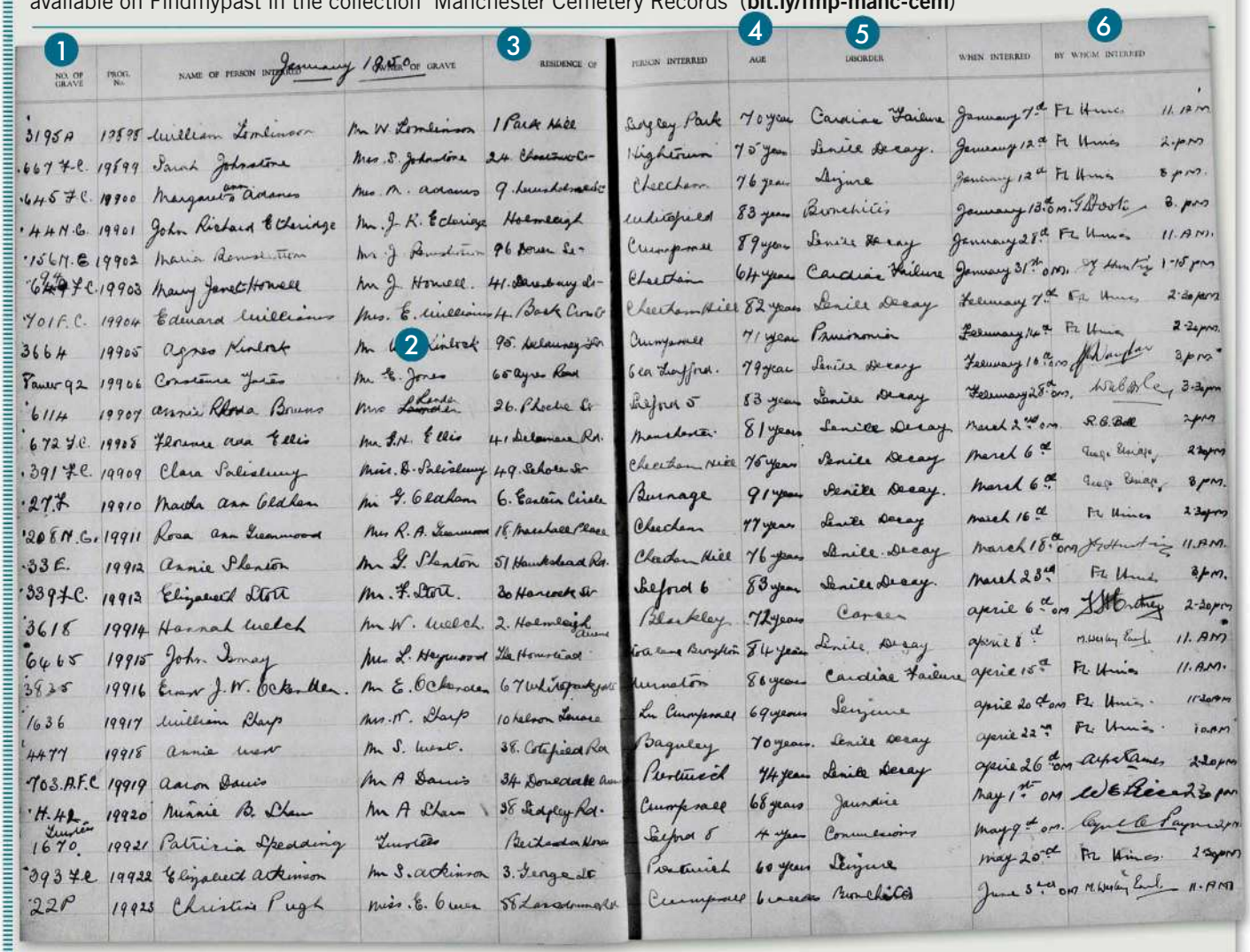
Percy was a commercial traveller for the London branch of J&P Coats, which at the time was the world's largest thread manufacturer. Most of the company's archive is held at the University of Glasgow (**gla.ac.uk**), and I was able to obtain details of his employment.

Percy also appears in traditional sources, such as electoral rolls, which confirmed what I believed about where in South London he was living. The electoral rolls that I needed for the 1940s and 1950s were available on Ancestry. From his death certificate, I discovered that he died of heart disease in a Surrey nursing home. His burial record at West Norwood Cemetery can be accessed at Deceased Online. I have a copy of his will, obtained from the Government's Find a Will website (**probatesearch.service.gov.uk**), which told me that his estate was left to my mother.

GETTY IMAGES

Cemetery Record, 1950

This record from the Wesleyan Methodist Cemetery in Cheetham Hill, Manchester, Lancashire, is available on Findmypast in the collection 'Manchester Cemetery Records' (**bit.ly/fmp-manc-cem**)



1 No. of Grave	Prog. No.	Name of Person Interred	Owner of Grave	3 Residence of	Person Interred	4 Age	5 Disorder	When Interred	6 By Whom Interred
3195A	19898	William Tomlinson	Mr W. Tomlinson	1 Park Hill	Bolsley Park	70 years	Cardiac Failure	January 7th	Fr Hunt 11.12 AM
667 F.C.	19899	Sarah Johnstone	Mrs S. Johnstone	24 Cheetham Co-	Nightingale	75 years	Senile Decay.	January 12th	Fr Hunt 2.pm
645 F.C.	19900	Margaret Ann Adams	Mrs M. Adams	9 Lunshalmeade	Cheetham	76 years	Injure	January 12th	Fr Hunt 3 pm.
44N.C.	19901	John Richard Etheridge	Mr J. K. Etheridge	Holmleigh	Whitefield	83 years	Bronchitis	January 13th 0.M.	T. Booth 3. pm
1561N.E	19902	Maria Renshaw	Mrs J. Renshaw	96 Bowen St	Crumpsall	89 years	Senile Decay	January 28th	Fr Hunt 11. AM.
697F.C.	19903	Mary Janet Howell	Mr J. Howell.	41. Salisbury St	Cheetham	64 years	Cardiac Failure	January 31st O.M.	J. Hunt 1-15 pm
701F.C.	19904	Edward Williams	Mrs. E. Williams	4. Back Cross	Cheetham Hill	82 years	Senile Decay	February 7th	Fr Hunt 2-30 pm
364H	19905	Agnes Kinlock	Mr E. Kinlock	95. Kelsey St	Crumpsall	71 years	Pneumonia	February 14th	Fr Hunt 2-30 pm.
Tower 92	19906	Constance Jones	Mr E. Jones	65 Ayres Road	6 ca Longford.	79 years	Senile Decay	February 16th O.M.	J. Hunt 3 pm
611H	19907	Annie Rhoda Brown	Mrs Leonard	26. Rhodes St	Salford 5	83 years	Senile Decay	February 28th O.M.	W.E.B. Ley 3-30 pm
672 F.C.	19908	Florence Ada Ellis	Mr F.H. Ellis	41 Delamere Rd.	Manchester.	81 years	Senile Decay	March 2nd O.M.	R.G. Bell 2 pm
391 F.C.	19909	Clara Salisbury	Mrs. D. Salisbury	49. Scholes St	Cheetham Hill	76 years	Senile Decay	March 6th	Geo. Knapp 2 30 pm
27F	19910	Martha Ann Oldham	Mr G. Oldham	6. Easton Circle	Burnage	91 years	Senile Decay.	March 6th	Geo. Knapp 3 pm.
208N.G.	19911	Rosa Ann Greenwood	Mrs R. A. Greenwood	18 Marshall Place	Cheetham	77 years	Senile Decay	March 16th	Fr Hunt 2 30 pm
33E.	19912	Annie Slinton	Mr G. Slinton	51 Hawkshead Rd.	Cheetham Hill	76 years	Senile Decay	March 18th O.M.	J. Hunt 11. AM.
339F.C.	19913	Elizabeth Stott	Mr. F. Stott.	20 Hancock St	Salford 6	83 years	Senile Decay.	March 23rd	Fr Hunt 3 pm.
361B	19914	Hannah Welch	Mr W. Welch.	2. Holmleigh Avenue	Pendleton	72 years	Cancer	April 6th O.M.	J. H. Corney 2-30 pm
6465	19915	John Tomay	Mr L. Heywood	The Homestead	Crossacre Broughton	84 years	Senile Decay	April 8th	M. Wesley Earle 11. AM
3825	19916	Emma J.W. Ockenden	Mr E. Ockenden	67 Whitworth St	Burnaston	86 years	Cardiac Failure	April 15th	Fr Hunt 11. AM.
1636	19917	William Sharp	Mrs N. Sharp	10 Nelson Terrace	Low Crumpsall	69 years	Injure	April 20th O.M.	Fr Hunt 11-30 AM
4477	19918	Annie West	Mr S. West.	38. Whitefield Rd	Bagulay	70 years	Senile Decay	April 22nd	Fr Hunt 10 AM
703.A.F.C	19919	Aaron Davis	Mr A Davis	34 Bonsdale Avenue	Pendlebury	74 years	Senile Decay	April 26th O.M.	A. Stokes 2 30 pm
H.42 Lunden	19920	Minnie B. Shaw	Mr A Shaw	38 Sidgley Rd.	Crumpsall	68 years	Jaundice	May 1st O.M.	W.E. Rice 2 30 pm
1670.	19921	Patricia Spedding	Lunden	Bethesda Hosp	Salford 5	4 years	Convulsions	May 9th O.M.	Cyril C. Payne 2 pm
393 F.C.	19922	Elizabeth Atkinson	Mr S. Atkinson	3. Grange St	Pendlebury	60 years	Injure	May 25th	Fr Hunt 2 30 pm
22P	19923	Christina Pugh	Mrs. E. Owen	58 Lansdowne St	Crumpsall	6 weeks	Bronchitis	June 3rd O.M.	M. Wesley Earle 11. AM

1 No. Of Grave
You should be able to source a plan for every cemetery, enabling you to find the exact location of your relation's grave.

2 Mr E Jones
Although the owner of a grave does not always share a surname with the deceased, they may well have been related.

3 Residence
In a period with no available censuses, the deceased's address is useful. Compare this with directories or electoral rolls.

4 Age
The age at death helps to ensure that the individual mentioned in the cemetery record is indeed your relation.

5 Disorder
The cause of death is a valuable addition if you don't want to order a death certificate for all your relatives.

6 By Whom Interred
The name of the person performing the interment is recorded, so you can find out more about them and their role.

unions (**nls.uk/catalogues/labour-history/**), and medical directories up to 1959 are on Ancestry. The National Archives at Kew (TNA) has a guide to records preserved elsewhere at **nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/labour-history-records-held-by-other-archives/**.

Companies' Archives

Many companies maintain their own archive including shoe manufacturer Clarks (**shoemakersmuseum.org.uk**), Rowntrees (**york.ac.uk/borthwick/holdings/what-we-hold/rowntree/**), British Telecom (**bt.com/about/bt/our-history/bt-archives**), Lever Brothers (**archives-unilever.com**), Cadbury's (**birmingham.ac.uk/facilities/cadbury**), Boots (**boots-uk.com/about-boots-uk/company-information/our-boots-heritage/**) and Sainsbury's (**sainsburyarchive.org.uk**). Other firms' records are in local archives. For example, material for employees of Rosyth Dockyard, up to 1967, is held by OnFife Archives (**onfife.com/libraries-archives/archives/**), and on Ancestry with images. Lists ▶

Holidaymakers on the Promenade in Eastbourne, Sussex, c1950

of Post Office workers, up until 1979, are also on Ancestry, along with registers of nurses, midwives and physiotherapists. Findmypast offers details of Thames watermen and lightermen up to 2010. So we can learn that DT Davies, an auxiliary postman from Carmarthen, South-West Wales, received his pension in 1970, while Ernest William Aldis of Plaistow, East London, became an apprentice waterman in 1948.

The postwar period was one of movement, with immigration, emigration and overseas travel becoming an increasing feature of people's lives. Passenger lists for those entering and leaving the UK, from or to places outside Europe, up to 1960 are held at TNA. Using these lists, you can track family members who made long-distance sea voyages. The outgoing lists, from class BT 27, are on both Ancestry and Findmypast, while the incoming lists (from class BT 26) are on Ancestry only. Records of naturalisation are at TNA too, with indexes, up to 1990, on Findmypast. If you have relatives who emigrated, don't forget to look for records at their destination.

For those with family going to Australia, the National Archives of Australia (**naa.gov.au**) has record cards for those entering the country up until 1972 that are freely available online; these are indexed on Findmypast. Other Australian immigrant records are also available, including for those who were sent under child-migrant schemes; see **naa.gov.au/explore-collection/immigration-and-citizenship**.

The second half of the 20th century brought great social change. It is important to record what everyday life was like for those on our family tree, as well as their names and dates. We went from ration books to ready meals, from liberty bodices to miniskirts. This was the era of the National Health Service, the comprehensive education system and a new wave of feminism. Attitudes were changing. How did our relations feel about sexuality, religion, ethnicity or women's rights? This might all be within your personal experience, but it is history to your descendants.

Researching family history after the Second World War gives us a unique opportunity to write about everyday life with the benefit of personal testimony as a resource. Remember that the period includes your own life, and you are a permanent part of your own family history. Don't forget to write your own story, as well as those of your ancestors.

It is important to record what everyday life was like for those on our family tree

TOP TIP!

More recent research inevitably involves the living, so always balance your curiosity with respect for their sensitivities. Be careful what you share, and how.

RESOURCES

Take your research further

BOOKS

Investigating the Twentieth Century
Evelyn Lord
Tempus, 1999
You can borrow this "guided tour through the maze of available sources" for free from the Internet Archive at **tinyurl.com/arch-invest-lord**.

Remember Then
Janet Few
Family History Partnership, 2015
Janet presents 80 women's memories capturing the social history of 1946–1969, as well as tips for recording your relations' memories.

MUSEUM

BEAMISH MUSEUM
a **Beamish, County Durham DH9 0RG**
t 0191 370 4000
w **beamish.org.uk**
The "living museum of the north" has areas recreating farms of the 1940s and 1950s, and a 1950s town.

WEBSITES

HISTORIC ENGLAND
w **historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/**
This searchable collection of historic images is useful for social historical background and photos of communities.

HISTORIC UK
w **historic-uk.com/CultureUK/1950-1960s-Childhood/**
You can find many articles about the social history of the latter 20th century here, including this example.

JANET FEW is an author, historian and educator who leads the 'Writing Your Life Story Club' for the Society of Genealogists (**sog.org.uk**)

GETTY IMAGES

AGRA
ASSOCIATION OF GENEALOGISTS AND RESEARCHERS IN ARCHIVES

WHY HIRE AN AGRA GENEALOGIST?

- We represent the best professionals in England and Wales
- Accredited independent genealogists
- Wide-ranging skills to solve challenging problems
- Experienced and regular archive researchers
- Backed by a Code of Practice to offer peace of mind

Visit www.agra.org.uk/memberbrowse
to find the right genealogist for your research.
AGRA - Genealogical Excellence

Strathclyde Institute for Genealogical Studies

University of Strathclyde Glasgow

World leading courses in Genealogical Studies

Our programme covers sources from across the world with an emphasis on research within the British Isles.

- Gain a postgraduate Certificate, Diploma or MSc in Genealogical, Palaeographic and Heraldic Studies.
- Flexible online format; study from anywhere at anytime.
- A previous degree may not be required for entry.
- Developed by professional genealogists with constructive feedback provided by assigned tutors at all levels.
- Currently accepting applications for our online part time, full time and modular courses commencing in September and October 2025.
- Or choose from a range of online beginner/intermediate classes and professional development courses running throughout the year.

www.strath.ac.uk/studywithus/centreforlifelonglearning
Email: cll-sigs@strath.ac.uk

The University of Strathclyde is a charitable body, registered in Scotland, number SC015263

AGRA MEMBER

Past Discoveries

apg member

UK Wide Family and House History Research

By a Qualified Professional Genealogist - Lisa Dunbar Dip. Gen. QG.

All enquiries are welcome. All types of genealogical research undertaken – including brief look-ups to full family histories, brick-walls in your research, house history research and bespoke bound family history books which are ideal as Birthday or Christmas presents. We also offer various family history packages.

Tel: +44 (0) 1279 651754
Mob: +44 (0) 7966 501874

www.pastdiscoveries.co.uk
enquiries@pastdiscoveries.co.uk

DON'T MISS THE WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE? NEWSLETTER

Get essential updates from the world of family history with our **FREE** email newsletter, delivered to your inbox every week

KEEP UPDATED!
Don't miss out on important family history news

Latest News
Accurate, in-depth coverage of the week's biggest record releases and genealogy news

Family History Tutorials
Learn how to master basic skills or take your research further with our genealogy tutorials, packed with top tips and expert advice

Latest Offers
Discover our round-up of new deals and discounts for family historians – helping you save money

Real Stories
Read extraordinary real-life stories that our readers have uncovered while researching their trees

GETTY IMAGES

SIGN UP TODAY BY VISITING
whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com
SCROLL DOWN TO FIND OUR 'SIGN ME UP' BOX

Jewish immigrants at a market in the East End of London, c1890

Jewish Research

Jonathan Scott rounds up the most useful online resources for tracing Jewish ancestors

Actor Andrew Garfield followed in the footsteps of his grandfather Samuel Garfinkel, born in Kielce, southern Poland, to uncover his Jewish heritage in the latest series of *Who Do You Think You Are?*.

However, this is not a simple homogenous subject. Jewish genealogy can span languages, cultures and legal systems. Researchers are likely to encounter dates attributed to different calendars, as well as records in Hebrew, Yiddish, Judaeo-Spanish/Ladino, German, Polish, Arabic or Russian, and in formats ranging from tombstones to rabbinic writings. It's also likely that your research may cross countries and even continents, leading to records of migration, citizenship and naturalisation, which vary in terms of both their survival and accessibility.

Broadly speaking, Jewish communities are grouped into Ashkenazi (Eastern and Central European), Sephardic (originating in Spain and Portugal), and the Jews of North Africa and the Middle East. We've pulled together some well-established online tools that can help you navigate all this complexity.

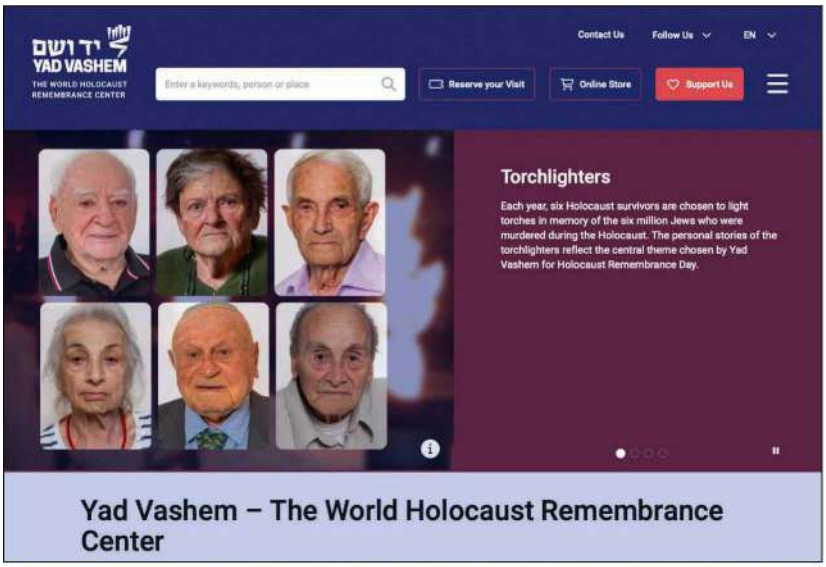
JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

w **jgsgb.org.uk**

The society's site has had a makeover since we last covered this topic. Membership (£35 annually) will give you access to everything, but a lot of material is open to all. Click 'Resources' in the menu bar for details of society publications, the library in Knightsbridge, Central London, and special-interest and regional groups. The 'Useful Links and Information Sources' section leads to online indexes and databases such as the Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter Database (**jewishroots.uct.ac.za/Shelter.aspx**), recording newly arrived refugees in London (1896–1914), and headstone inscriptions (**cemeteryscribes.com**). And try 'Search Our JGSGB Records' to explore the society's combined database, although you'll need to join to follow the breadcrumb trail.

GETTY IMAGES

BEST WEBSITES



YAD VASHEM

w **www.yadvashem.org**

The website of the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem hosts a database containing more than 4.9 million names of Jews murdered in the Holocaust, compiled from Pages of Testimony (forms recording victims' details, submitted by friends or relations), transport lists, ghetto records and postwar tracing efforts. Results can be narrowed by birth or death year, and you'll often find biographical details and photos. Elsewhere there are 15,000 full-length survivor testimonies, a deportation database that reconstructs the forced transports, and the Righteous Among the Nations database, paying tribute to those who risked their lives to save Jews.

THE LONDON ARCHIVES

w **thelondonarchives.org**

The former London Metropolitan Archives holds the archives of the United Synagogue (dating from 1870), the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation (Bevis Marks and other Sephardic synagogues), and the West London Synagogue. Material includes burial and members' registers, marriage authorisations, circumcision records and minute books. Other collections include the archives of the Jews' Free School, the Association of Jewish Teachers, the London School of Jewish Studies, and charities such as the Jews' Temporary Shelter and the Home for Aged Jews. An online guide to records of the Anglo-Jewish community is available at **tinyurl.com/tla-ang-jew-guide**.

EXPERT'S CHOICE

David Mendoza is a genealogist and the joint president of the Sephardic Genealogical Society (**sephardic.world**)

Jews about to sail from Liverpool to the USA in 1891

JewishGen (**jewishgen.org**) is the most widely used gateway for Jewish family history, thanks to its sheer breadth. The website brings together millions of records – cemetery listings, census data, Holocaust documents, memorial books and civil registrations – from across the Jewish world. Its country-specific research pages and community guides (or "kehila links") are especially helpful in identifying where records are held.

The vast Memorials & Plaques Database, for example, contains "256,000 synagogue memorial plaques, yizkor lists, congregation memorials, founding member and officer plaques, war memorials and rolls of honor, Holocaust memorials, deportation memorials, memorials from local conflicts records, along with 163,000 photos": **jewishgen.org/databases/memorial/**.

In addition the All United Kingdom Database (**jewishgen.org/databases/uk/**) incorporates a range of databases contributed to Jewish Communities and Records – United Kingdom (JCR-UK), a joint project between JewishGen and the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain. Together these hold 480,000 records, covering nearly 1,200 Jewish congregations. The search engine has a dial of options to try to help you track down a surname match – from 'phonetically like' and 'sounds like', to 'fuzzy', 'fuzzier' and 'fuzziest'. There are more advanced search features too, but these are restricted to those who contribute at least $100 annually to the JewishGen General Fund.

The majority of JewishGen's indexed records and community material relate to Eastern Europe, Germany and immigrant populations in North America. Researchers with Sephardic, North African or Middle Eastern Jewish ancestry will be worse off, although more content is being added all the time. Elsewhere you'll find a useful inventory of the Jewish-specific resources at the FamilySearch Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA.

The website is free to use (registration required), but works best with a paid data subscription via Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) or affiliated donors.

GETTY IMAGES

A NAÇÃO HEBRAICA

w **anacaohebraica.transkribus.eu**

The aforementioned Bevis Marks records at The London Archives include a history of the congregation plus volumes of ketubot (marriage contracts), circumcision registers (1679–1775), and birth (1767–1881) and burial (1733–1918) registers. Many of the congregation's pre-20th century archives are on the National Library of Israel's site (**nli.org.il/en**). There's also this project, named after the Portuguese for "the Hebrew Nation" and using machine learning to transcribe the earliest annual accounts of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation, beginning with 1676–1678 although "Transcriptions for other years and documents will be added as they are completed".

SEPHARDIC GENEALOGY

w **sephardicgenealogy.com**

The authoritative website from this month's expert David Mendoza is essential if your Jewish kin originated in Spain and Portugal, a land known by Jews as Sepharad or Sefarad. It uses a simple blog design, with a column of subjects that often lead to summaries of researching in different countries. A good starting point is the entry on Sephardic surnames, which seeks to explain some of the naming traditions and myths that have arisen around this branch of genealogy. You'll also find a more complete definition for Sephardic Jews, which formed three often overlapping and intermarried diasporas – Megorashim, Eastern Sephardim and Western Sephardim.

Go Further

Eight more sites you can't afford to miss

ANCESTRY

w **ancestry.co.uk**

Jewish records here include UK naturalisations, US immigration lists, Eastern European births and marriages, and Holocaust-related material.

IAJGS

w **iajgs.org**

On the website of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies you can find details of affiliated groups and conferences.

INTERNATIONAL JEWISH CEMETERY PROJECT

w **iajgscemetery.org**

This IAJGS project seeks to catalogue Jewish cemeteries in every country. Many entries have burial lists, photos and the historical context.

JRI-POLAND

w **jri-poland.org**

The website of the organisation Jewish Records Indexing – Poland offers millions of indexed records for tracing kin from historic Poland.

MYHERITAGE

w **myheritage.com**

MyHeritage is especially strong in both Israeli and European records.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF ISRAEL

w **nli.org.il/en**

Here you will find the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, a vast collection of digitised books and community records.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

w **nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/**

TNA holds important resources for British Jews such as naturalisation records, alien registration cards, military service files and wills.

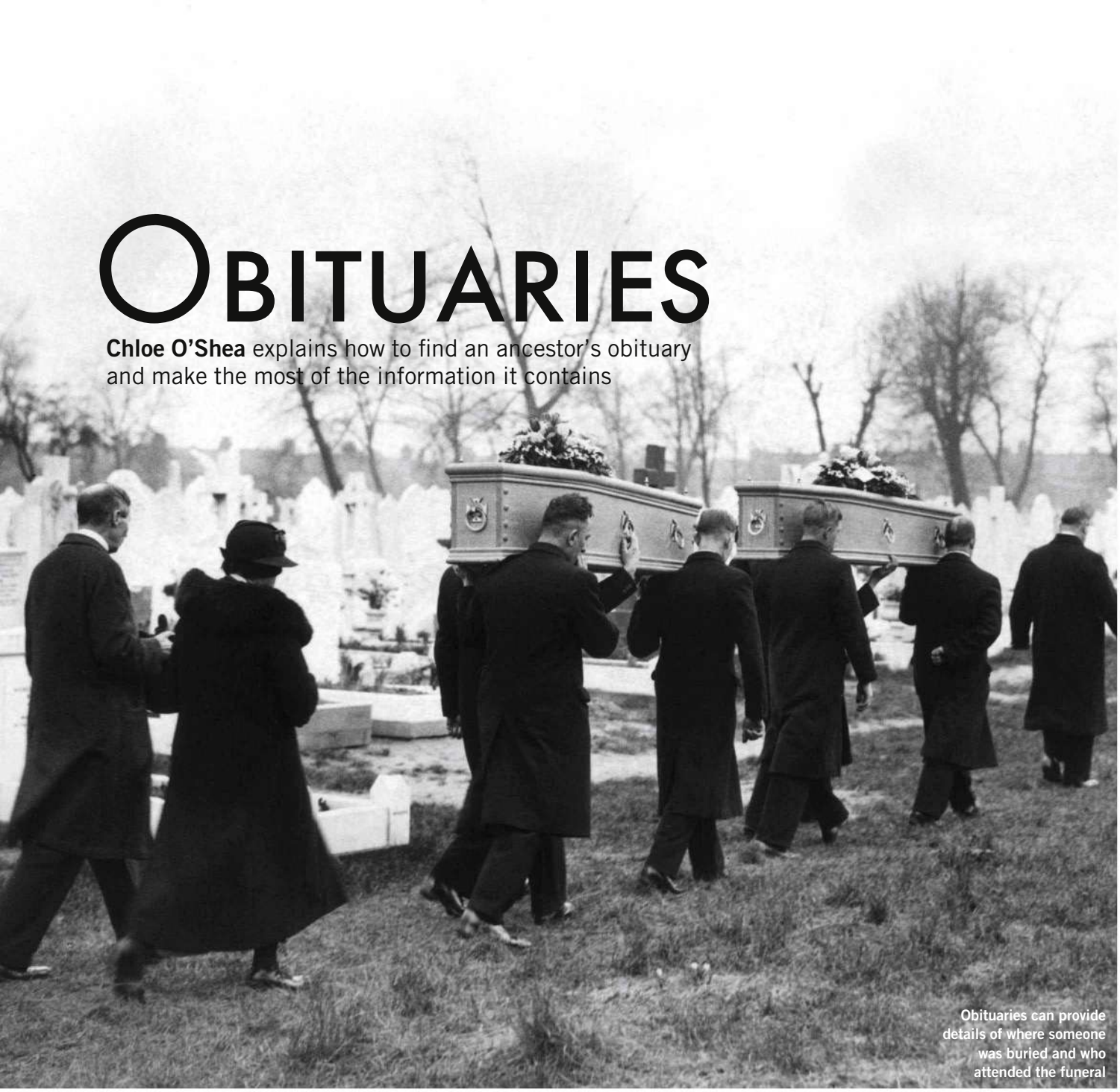
TRANSKRIBUS

w **transkribus.eu**

This online transcription tool for historical documents, which is powered by AI, can read scripts including German, Russian, Hebrew, Yiddish and early modern Portuguese.

OBITUARIES

Chloe O'Shea explains how to find an ancestor's obituary and make the most of the information it contains



Obituaries can provide details of where someone was buried and who attended the funeral

An obituary is the notification of a person's death with their brief life story. The length of an obituary varies from a few lines of summary to several hundred words, and obituaries can contain fantastic detail about a person's life and death.

Obituaries have commonly appeared in newspapers, magazines and journals since the 18th century. These originally focused on the proverbial great and the good, such as politicians and royalty. Over time, local newspapers began to print obituaries for the deceased from their own area. These were initially for people who the publishers believed would be of interest to readers, such as clergymen, notorious criminals, and villagers who managed to live to an advanced age. Editors came to realise that printing obituaries was a good way for them to make revenue, charging people by the word or line to tell the story of their loved ones. So you can find obituaries for ancestors from all backgrounds, particularly from the late 19th century onwards.

Editors realised that printing obituaries was a good way to make revenue

The detail contained in an obituary varies. Information may include the deceased's name, occupation, age at death, cause of death, place of death, name of spouse and children, and details of the funeral. There may be additional family members named such as siblings and grandchildren; sometimes the deceased's parents or grandparents may be named if this was deemed noteworthy. If the deceased was well known due to their occupation, whether that was a politician, actor or soldier for example, there tends to be good detail about their working life. Their place of birth may be given, as well as any parish moves and notable achievements.

It is exciting to come ▶

GETTY IMAGES

Obituary, 1902

This obituary, which was published in the *Bridport News* on 7 November 1902, is available digitally via the British Newspaper Archive (**britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**)

1 Mrs Foote
The deceased is referred to throughout as "Mrs Foote", and neither her first name nor that of her husband are provided.

2 Rev.
Mrs Foote's husband's occupation is given, with a note that he was formerly a pastor of Bridport Baptist Chapel.

3 Heart Failure
The cause and sudden circumstances of Mrs Foote's death are given, with information about her previous good health.

4 Funeral
Details of the funeral are provided including the date, place, the officiate and, later, the names of mourners.

5 48th Anniversary
The length of Mr and Mrs Foote's marriage is quoted as 48 years, with charming detail given about their characters.

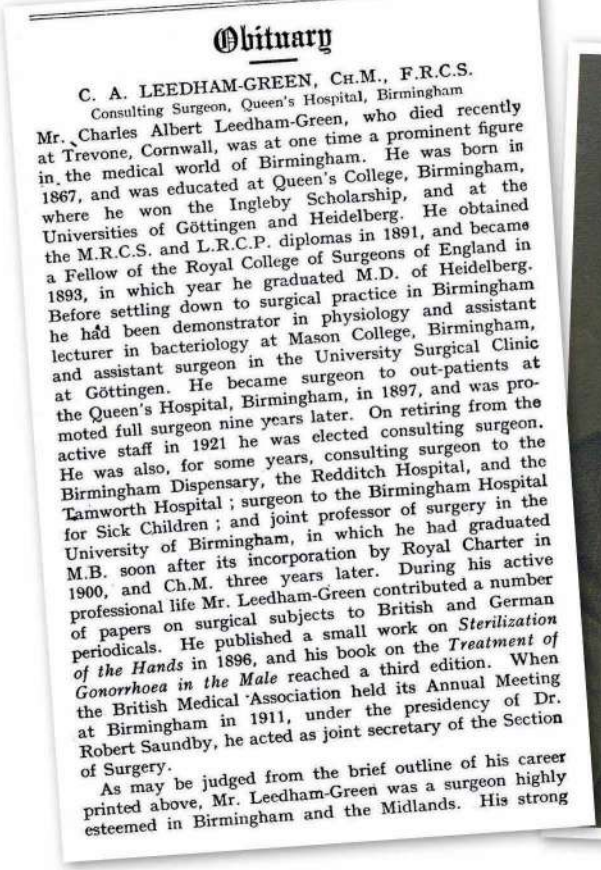
6 Immediate Mourners
The married names of Mrs Foote's daughters are given with their place of residence plus the names of two grandchildren.

OBITUARY.

1 Mrs. FOOTE.

We regret to announce the sudden death of Mrs. Foote, wife of the 2 Rev. W. Evans Foote, formerly pastor of the Bridport Baptist Chapel, which occurred suddenly at Honiton, on Friday. The Rev. and Mrs. Foote had only just returned to Honiton from London, for it was between these places at their daughters' homes that they spent most of their time. Up to within a few minutes of her death, Mrs. Foote was in good health, and on Friday evening after an early supper she commenced a cheerful conversation in the drawing room with other members of the family, when she was suddenly seized wit 3 heart failure, and in less than five minutes had passed away. Th 4 funeral took place on Tuesday, at Honiton, the burial service being conducted by the Rev. Mr. Harry, Baptist minister at Honiton, and a successor to Mr. Foote, Honiton being the scene of the latter's first pastorate, and here it was he preached his first sermon 52 years ago. Mr. and Mrs. Foote had passed th 5 48th anniversary of their wedding last July, and during the whole of their married life, each to the other had been a helper, and a bond of sympathy existed between them in the path along which they trod. They lived in Bridport about seven years, and left the town eight years ago, but both are still remembered by many, for their chapel, public, and private life was all that could be desired. The deceased lady always took an active part in the benevolent work of the town, and as mother, pastor's wife, friend, or helper was a "pattern" to all. Amongst those from Bridport who attended the funeral were Mr. T. Tuck, Mr. and Mrs. Miller, Mrs. Loxton, and Mr. Alfred Baker. Th 6 immediate mourners were the two daughters, Mrs. Matthews, of Honiton, and Mrs. Bright, of London, with their husbands, Messrs. Matthews and Bright, Master Rex and Miss Dorothy Matthews (grandchildren) the former being at the present time a student for the same ministry as his grandfather. A large number of people paid their token of respect to the memory of one they had loved and esteemed, and at the cemetery the scene was a striking and pathetic one, the floral tokens being beautiful in the extreme.

The greatest sympathy is felt for Mr. Foote in his irreparable bereavement, and Bridport people, who knew him and the deceased lady, join in extending it for the memory of old days and appreciation of their past and successful ministry in the town.

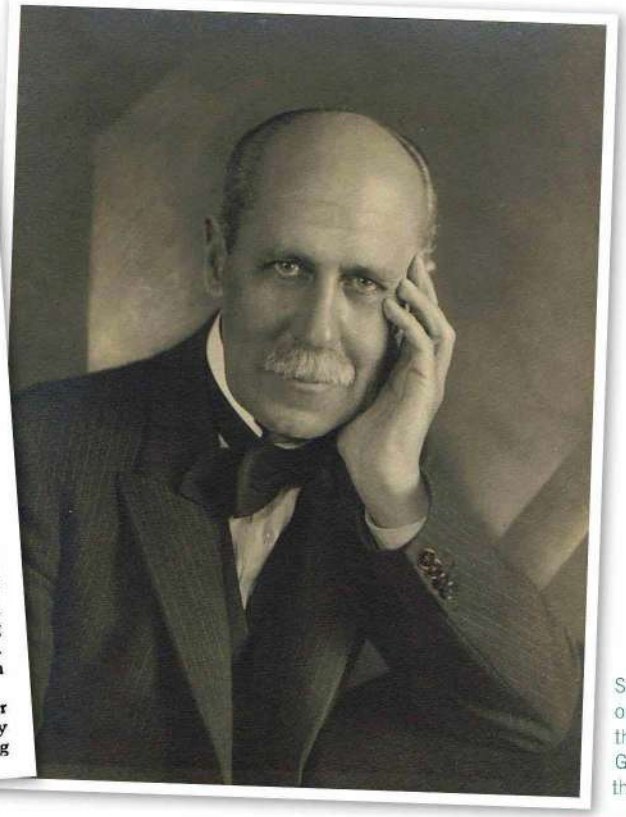


Obituary

C. A. LEEDHAM-GREEN, CH.M., F.R.C.S.
Consulting Surgeon, Queen's Hospital, Birmingham

Mr. Charles Albert Leedham-Green, who died recently at Trevone, Cornwall, was at one time a prominent figure in the medical world of Birmingham. He was born in 1867, and was educated at Queen's College, Birmingham, where he won the Ingleby Scholarship, and at the Universities of Göttingen and Heidelberg. He obtained the M.R.C.S. and L.R.C.P. diplomas in 1891, and became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of England in 1893, in which year he graduated M.D. of Heidelberg. Before settling down to surgical practice in Birmingham he had been demonstrator in physiology and assistant lecturer in bacteriology at Mason College, Birmingham, and assistant surgeon in the University Surgical Clinic at Göttingen. He became surgeon to out-patients at the Queen's Hospital, Birmingham, in 1897, and was promoted full surgeon nine years later. On retiring from the active staff in 1921 he was elected consulting surgeon. He was also, for some years, consulting surgeon to the Birmingham Dispensary, the Redditch Hospital, and the Tamworth Hospital; surgeon to the Birmingham Hospital for Sick Children; and joint professor of surgery in the University of Birmingham, in which he had graduated M.B. soon after its incorporation by Royal Charter in 1900, and Ch.M. three years later. During his active professional life Mr. Leedham-Green contributed a number of papers on surgical subjects to British and German periodicals. He published a small work on *Sterilization of the Hands* in 1896, and his book on the *Treatment of Gonorrhoea in the Male* reached a third edition. When the British Medical Association held its Annual Meeting at Birmingham in 1911, under the presidency of Dr. Robert Saundby, he acted as joint secretary of the Section of Surgery.

As may be judged from the brief outline of his career printed above, Mr. Leedham-Green was a surgeon highly esteemed in Birmingham and the Midlands. His strong



Specialist journals often carry obituaries. This example, for the surgeon Charles Leedham-Green *(pictured)*, comes from the *British Medical Journal*

across an obituary for a forebear. They often describe elements of a person's life or character that we otherwise would not have known, such as their charitable work, sunny disposition or hobbies.

Check The Facts

However, obituaries are not always as trustworthy as they first seem, and care needs to be taken to corroborate any facts with another source where possible. Just as an age can be inaccurate on a death certificate, so it can in an obituary. Similarly, where a place of birth is often incorrect on a census return so it may be in an obituary. It all depends on who wrote the article, and what they believed to be true. Obituaries also tend to be unbalanced, focusing much more on good points. Where a fact is provided, ensure you back this up where possible with another source. There are even rare cases where an obituary has been mistakenly published before someone died. Additionally, then as now, no publication is immune to editorial errors.

Military officers often had obituaries published in regimental journals; some are on regimental websites. Magazines and journals that featured obituaries include *The Gentleman's Magazine*, published between 1731 and 1922, and the *British Medical Journal*, which launched in 1852 and is still published today as *The BMJ*. Issues of *The Gentleman's Magazine* can be viewed for free at the digital library HathiTrust (**catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000542092**), while issues of the *British Medical Journal* can be searched and viewed via **bmj.com/archive**, also for free. These are just two examples of many.

Most family historians will need to peruse local newspapers for their ancestors' obituaries. This is most likely to involve the massive British Library collection online at the British Newspaper Archive (**britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**), which is also available to anyone with an 'Everything' level subscription to Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk/newspapers**), while the focus of the Ancestry-owned website Newspapers.com (**newspapers.com**) is more international. A simple search for your forebear's name may bring up a positive result; however, at other times you may need to change your search term or refine the results. First names are not always given with people recorded as "Mr D Roberts", and wives often referred to by their husband's name such as "Mrs David Roberts". You may find it best to search the local paper for their surname alone in the month or two after they died.

Be Persistent

If you're struggling to find a relation's obituary, try searching using all possible variations of their name, and check back again in the future since more articles are being digitised every week. When you find the right obituary, note down the title of the magazine or newspaper plus the volume/issue number and publication date so you can refer back to it; you should also download the image of the article or full page if you can, and add it to your online tree.

TOP TIP!

Our forebears often preserved newspaper cuttings containing loved ones' obituaries, so ask living relations or check your family ephemera to see if any have been handed down.

Resources

Take your research further

BOOK

Historical Research Using British Newspapers
Denise Bates
Pen & Sword, 2016
Bates explains how and where to find obituaries and related articles that were published in newspapers and magazines.

WEBSITES

BRITISH NEWSPAPER ARCHIVE
w **tinyurl.com/bna-blog-obits**
Rose Staveley-Wadham's excellent blog entry gives multiple examples from the UK showing the variety of obituaries that exist.

MYHERITAGE
w **tinyurl.com/myheritage-blog-obits**
This blog entry explains how to use various sources to uncover any obituaries for your ancestors, with examples from the USA.

CHLOE O'SHEA is a tutor for the Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies. Her latest book *Tracing Your Staffordshire Ancestors* was published by Pen & Sword on 16 May

Let nature's majesty unfold

And breathe. Slow life right down and take in its natural beauty. This land of remarkable creatures will reveal ancient tortoises, land iguanas and Darwin's finches. Get closer to these beautiful creatures than you ever imagined.

All-inclusive Expeditions to

Galápagos

Call our Expedition Travel Specialists now on
0203 553 1608 or visit **travelhx.com**

Scan the QR code to learn more

CRUISE COLLECTIVE

Join Cruise Collective for free and receive an **additional 5% OFF** your next HX adventure!

cruise-collective.com

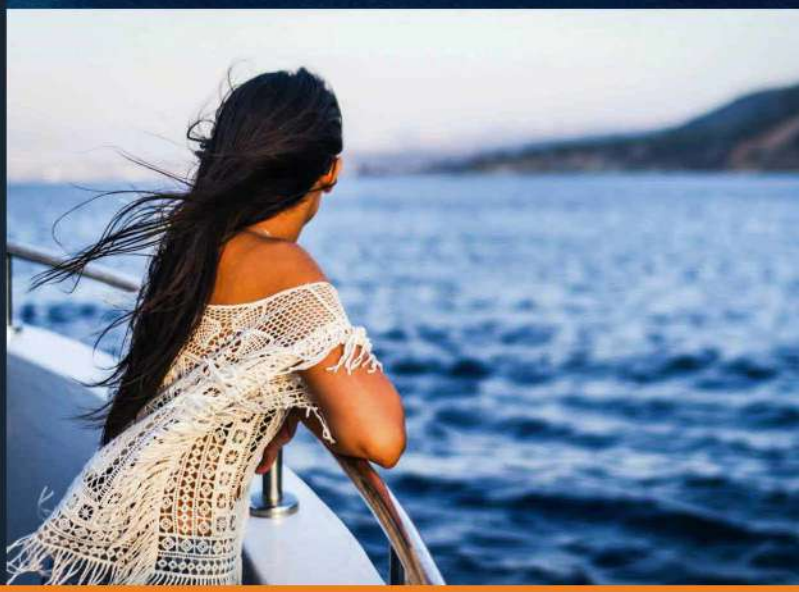
Terms and conditions: Cruise Collective member discount applies to new bookings only and is only applicable on voyage element. Discount available for direct guests only and cannot be booked via a travel agent. Images: © Andres Mesias/Clara Tuma.

ABTA Travel with confidence ABTA No.Y6835

CRUISE COLLECTIVE

Your Next Great Journey Starts Here

At Cruise Collective, we believe the best holidays start with both a spark and a smart saving. As a free-to-join member, you'll unlock exclusive offers on river, ocean and expedition cruises with top lines like Celebrity, Fred. Olsen, Hurtigruten and more. With handpicked itineraries and interest-led inspiration (think wine-tasting in the Med or wildlife-spotting in the Galápagos), it's not just where you go — it's how you get there.



Exclusive Member Discounts

	DISCOUNT	REDEMPTION CODE
AMBASSADOR CRUISE LINE	5% OFF	COLL5
Celebrity Cruises	10% OFF	CRUISE10
HX HURTIGRUTEN EXPEDITIONS	5% OFF	HX-UK-TCC
HURTIGRUTEN	5% OFF	HN-UK-TCC
Fred.Olsen Cruise Lines	£200	CCOL25
DFDS	33% OFF	Redeem on Cruise-Collective.com

How to use your discount

Match your passion to a cruise

Whatever your interest or hobby, there's a cruise experience you'll love.

Find the cruise you want

Find the cruise line you want and get your exclusive discount code from us.

Use the exclusive code

Apply the Cruise Collective discount code at checkout.

Join Cruise Collective for free today

See website for full T&C's.

Q&A

Our team of experts offers tips and inspiration Edited By Claire Vaughan

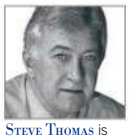
Anthony Adolph is a professional genealogist and the author of 11 books

Katherine Cobb is a member of AGRA based in Somerset

Margaret McGregor is a member of AGRA and ARA

Chris Paton is an author, tutor, genealogist and researcher

Jayne Shrimpton is a professional dress historian and portrait specialist



Steve Thomas is a genealogist with over 20 years' experience

Phil Tomaselli is a military family history expert and author

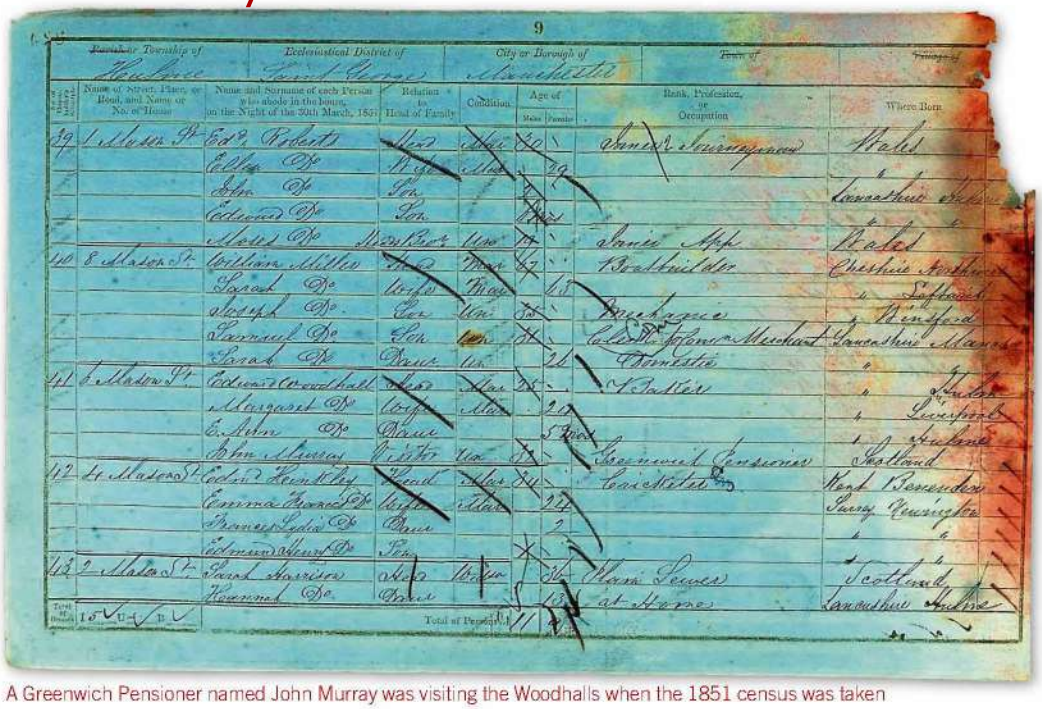
How can I find my Scottish Smithson link?

Q Margaret Woodhall (née Smithson), born c1827 Liverpool (according to the 1851 census), was the sister of my great grandfather, James Murray Smithson, born c1835 in Edinburgh. Their father was William Smithson, born c1811, possibly from Scotland. Several members of the Smithson family have the middle name Murray.

In the 1851 Manchester census, there is a visitor in Margaret's household called John Murray, born 1819 in Scotland, a Greenwich Pensioner. I'm wondering if he could be a relation of Margaret's. She and her husband Edward emigrated to New York in 1858.

John Murray could have been in the Navy and retired quite young. As a Greenwich Pensioner it sounds like he was an out-pensioner. I have looked at subsequent censuses in England, but can't find him. Can you help me track him down?

Janet Rigby



A Greenwich Pensioner named John Murray was visiting the Woodhalls when the 1851 census was taken

A The records for Greenwich Pensioners are held at The National Archives in Kew (TNA; **nationalarchives.gov.uk**). Records for out-pensioners 1737–1859 are catalogued under ADM 6/223–322, with payments for out-pensioners noted at ADM 6/321, ADM 22/254–443, ADM 23/170, ADM 73/63–64 and 95–131, PMG 71/5–13 and PMG 72/1–2. Further information on these and other records, such as certificates of service, are detailed in Simon Fowler's *Tracing Your Naval Ancestors* (Pen & Sword, 2011). Records for in-pensioners are catalogued under ADM 73, and include pensioners' admission papers 1790–1865, with descriptions and details of service in the Navy, and entry books for officers and pensioners 1704–1869. The records can be searched via TNA's online catalogue Discovery at **discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C1782**, but a quick search shows no matches to your John. Findmypast also has a 'British Royal Navy & Royal Marines Service and Pension Records, 1704–1939' dataset at **bit.ly/fmp-navy-marines-pensions**, but the information returned shows many John Murrays, with most of the entries undated.

The brick wall lies with the Smithson family itself, and a quick search on Scotland's People (**scotlandspeople.gov.uk**) shows a few Smithson marriage events in Edinburgh (at Edinburgh, Leith and Canongate) from 1760–1800 that may well be worth exploring.

You could also try checking Poor Law records at the county records offices for the areas in England where the Smithson siblings lived, prior to Margaret's emigration, in case an application was made for relief, which might note the names of both parents.

Taking an ancestral DNA test may also help to tie you into other Smithson branches.

Chris Paton

HAVE YOU HIT A BRICK WALL? Please email your questions or family photographs to the following address: **wdytyaquestions@ourmedia.co.uk**

If selected, your query will be answered on these pages. Please note that we receive a large volume of correspondence each month, and cannot reply to each message individually. You are more likely to receive a response if you keep the question and background information concise (no more than 150 words), with a clear goal of enquiry.

Why can't I find my great grandfather's will, despite having the probate details?

Q I don't understand why I can't find the will of my great grandfather, Joseph John Jackson. He died on 4 March 1930 in Shilton, Warwickshire, and probate was granted on 10 June 1930 in Birmingham. I have every necessary detail, but just cannot find the will. What am I missing? There seems to be no way of contacting the government website to ask them. Can you help me?
Peta McCauley

JACKSON Joseph John of Glenfield Cottages Shilton near **Coventry** died 4 March 1930 Administration **Birmingham** 10 June to Ellen Jackson widow. Effects £441.

The entry for Peta's forebear Joseph John Jackson in the National Probate Calendar

A When a person died, if they had made a will, this had to be submitted to a court for 'proving', which meant that it was accepted as a valid will, in a process known as 'probate'. If no will had been made, the next of kin, a friend or a creditor could apply to the court to 'administer' the estate. Having sworn that there was no will and that funeral expenses and debts would be met, the applicant was issued with letters of administration, authorising the disposal of the deceased's effects.

From 1858, when probate was removed from church courts to a National Court of Probate for England and Wales, a printed National Probate Calendar was issued annually. At first, there were separate sections for probates and for administrations, but from 1870, these were combined into one sequence. This remained the case in 1930, when Joseph John Jackson died. The calendar for that year records that, following his death on 4 March, administration was granted at Birmingham on 10 June to Ellen Jackson, widow.

Looking at other entries on the same page, we see that some are for probate and others for administration. In one case, the grant was for "administration (with will)". This means that a will had been left that was not legally valid – possibly it was not witnessed, or had no executor appointed. In such a case, administration was granted but the administrator could refer to the will for guidance in distributing assets. Unfortunately, this was not the case for Joseph John Jackson and therefore there is sadly no will to be found.
Margaret McGregor

Did my grandfather serve with the Artists Rifles during the First World War?

Q I'd love to know more about what my grandad, James Reid Anderson, did during the First World War. He was possibly in the Artists Rifles. He was born in Aberdeen on 17 August 1897. In 1914, he was studying for a Bachelor of Science degree at Aberdeen University, but somehow ended up as a works chemist in Holts Mill in Oldham, Lancashire, from October 1915 until April 1918, assisting with processing waste cotton for the manufacture of explosives.
Jan Saunders

A The photographs you provided clearly show a soldier of the Artists Rifles, a unit originally formed in 1859 in response to a feared French invasion, which attracted a wide variety of artists and other educated men. Their badge, visible in both photos, depicts the helmeted heads of the Roman gods Mars (war) and Minerva (wisdom). By the First World War, it was the 28th Battalion of the Territorial Army's London Division. Because its men were generally well educated, many who'd enlisted as privates were rapidly commissioned as officers. The battalion became, effectively, a training unit for young officers and a second battalion (2/28th) was raised.

I can't find a service record or Medal Index Card, but this is explained by an item on Ancestry in its 'Scotland, World War I Rolls of Honour, 1914–1918' collection at **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/62490**, which gives details of his service and which I suspect you've seen. It appears he graduated in 1915 and, since conscription was looming, volunteered, because this would give him a choice of regiment – he probably already had friends in the Artists Rifles. He may well have been working at the Holts Mill and so was allowed to stay there (explosives were in short supply in 1915–1916), or was sent there, still technically a soldier, because his expertise was required.

The mill closed in April 1918 and the Army reclaimed him. He never served overseas, but ended the war a corporal and had probably trained in the evenings with another territorial unit in Oldham.
Phil Tomaselli

One of the photos that Jan supplied

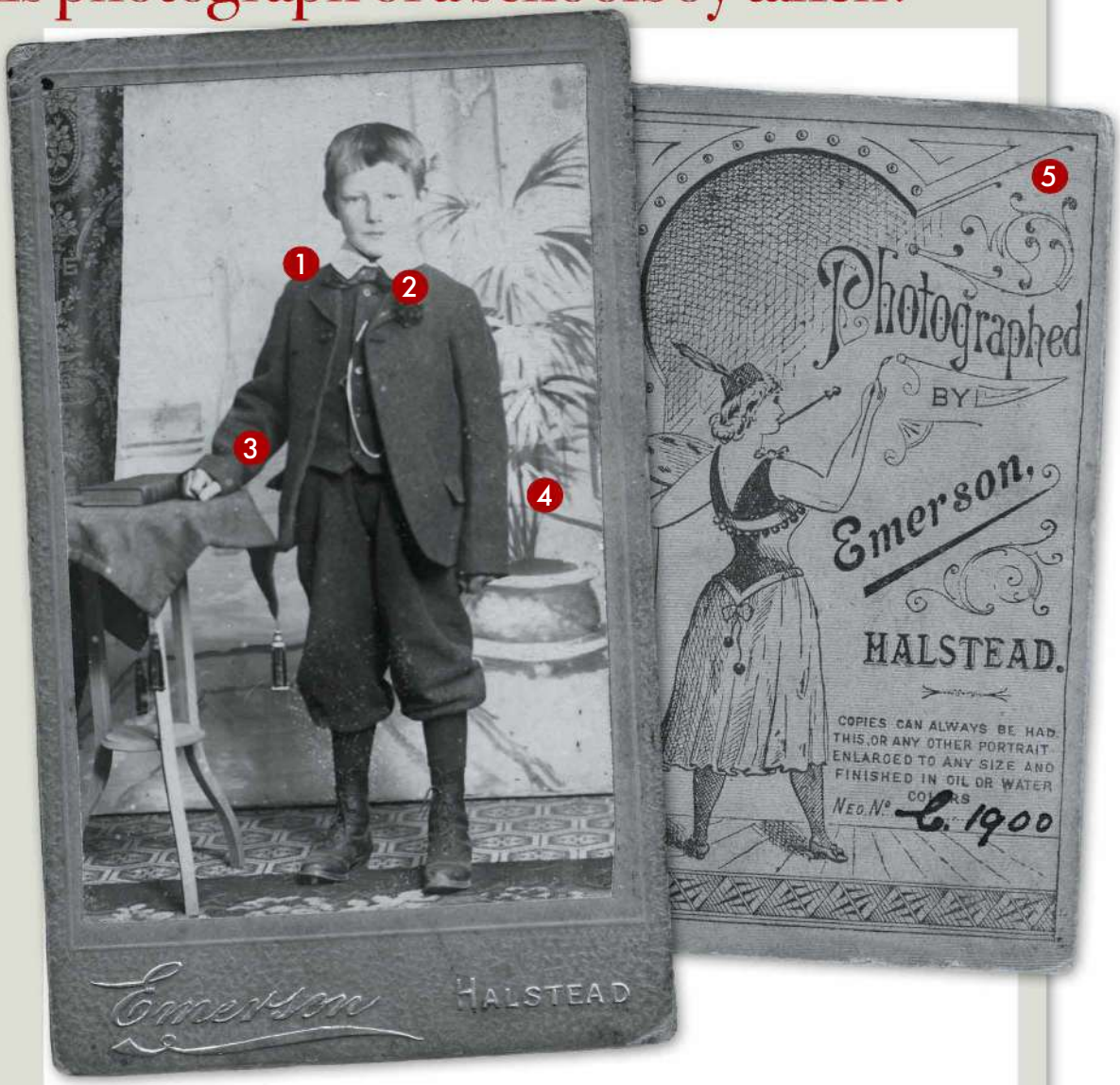
Picture Analysis

Why was this photograph of a schoolboy taken?

Q Going through some old family photographs, I found this one of a young man who I think is probably about seven years old. The size of the card mount is 4 x 2½ inches. Can you tell me when and why the photograph was taken?
Peter Simpson

A This photo is a formal studio portrait taken by a professional photographer at a time when very few households owned their own cameras. Its stated size, 4 x 2½ inches, confirms it is a *carte de visite* (CDV) – a standard Victorian and Edwardian format produced between 1860 and the early 1900s. Emerson's business activities are rather elusive, but a photographic colleague – a major collector of dated CDVs, and webmaster of the site Photographers of Great Britain and Ireland 1840–1940 (**cartedevisite.co.uk**) – has another Emerson photo on an identical card mount with the same reverse design, dated 1898. This strongly supports the likelihood that the annotation on the back of your photograph "c1900" is also the correct date.

While we should query handwritten dates on old photos, if all other available pointers add up, they can provide a genuine clue. This boy wears the archetypal late Victorian/early Edwardian young schoolboy's three-piece tailored suit accessorised with black stockings and leather boots, their style characteristic of the years around 1900. Aged about six to eight, he was probably born in the early 1890s. The little floral buttonhole in his lapel indicates a special personal occasion, possibly his birthday, although the photo may also celebrate his commencement at a new school.
Jayne Shrimpton



1 SCHOOL OUTFIT

In the late 1800s/early 1900s, children did not wear a uniform to their ordinary local elementary/primary school. Boys donned a juvenile version of the adult male suit, with knee-length knickerbockers replacing trousers.

2 SHIRT COLLAR

The starched, white, lozenge-shaped shirt collar known as the Eton collar (where it originated earlier) was widely worn for school and 'Sunday best' between the 1880s and 1910s.

3 SUIT

His suit looks pristine, but is clearly too big, which strongly suggests that these are new clothes suitable for school, while the book (a studio 'prop') on the table could imply study.

4 BACKDROP

The spiky palm in a pot that is depicted on the studio backcloth was a fashionable turn-of-the-century plant that often appears in reality, or painted, in photographs that were taken in the 1890s and early 1900s.

5 MOUNT

The picturesque, 'artistic' design of the reverse of the card mount, featuring a theatrically dressed woman holding paintbrush and palette, resembles similar printed photographic mount designs used from the late 1880s to early 1900s.

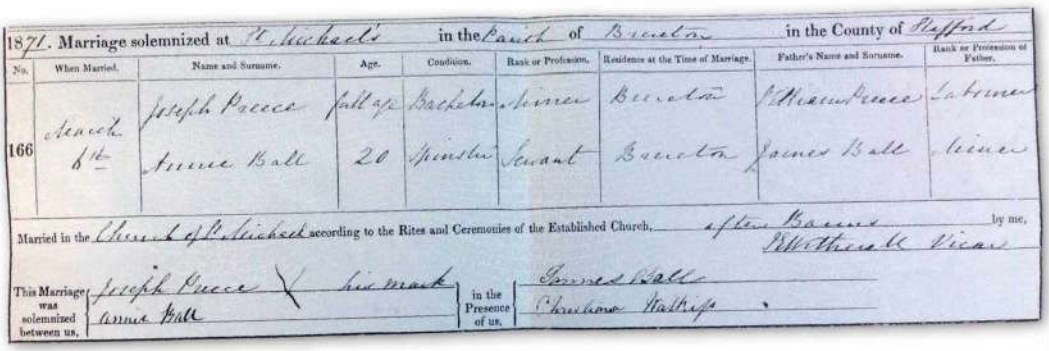
How do I find a birth record for Joseph Preece?

Q I'm looking for a birth record for Joseph Preece, who was born 1846 in Wellington (the census says Hereford and Shropshire). He died in 1907 in Cannock, Staffordshire. According to the information that is recorded on his marriage certificate, his father was called William.
Jayne Tuck

A The 1871–1901 censuses suggest that Joseph was born between 1844 and 1847. Apart from one census in which his birthplace is recorded as not known, Joseph always said that he was born at Wellington, but the county varies. It may be that he did not know in which county he was born, both Shropshire and Herefordshire have a place named Wellington, and the enumerator simply recorded what they assumed to be the correct county. However, the one constant is "Wellington", suggesting that he was either born at somewhere called Wellington, or lived there as a child. I was unable to find a possible entry for him in the 1851 census, but in 1861 a Joseph Preece born 1843/1844 at Canon Pyon (a parish adjacent to Wellington) was living at Wellington, Herefordshire, with his widowed mother named Ann.

Not all births were registered in the early years of civil registration, so we must search baptisms too. In Shropshire, the only possible contender was a baptism in 1848 at Bridgnorth; however, the child was buried just a few days later. In Herefordshire, two births were registered at Weobley and another at Hereford. The only baptism of interest is that of Joseph, the son of William and Susanna, at Canon Pyon on 13 December 1843. Presumably, Susanna is the widowed Ann in the 1861 Wellington census.

This may well be 'your' Joseph, but you should obtain the birth certificates mentioned above, to confirm this was the only Joseph with a father named William.
Katherine Cobb



1871. Marriage solemnized at St Michael's in the Parish of Brewton in the County of Stafford

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
166	March 8th	Joseph Preece	full age	Bachelor	Miner	Brewton	William Preece	Labourer
		Anne Ball	20	Spinster	Servant	Brewton	James Ball	Miner

Married in the Church of St Michael according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, after Banns by me, W Whitehouse Vicar

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Joseph Preece his mark; Anne Ball

in the Presence of us, James Ball; Charlotte Hallips

The record of Joseph Preece's marriage in 1871 states that his father was a labourer named William Preece

TOP TIP

Although compulsory civil registration of births (as well as marriages and deaths) was introduced in England and Wales on 1 July 1837, it was only in 1875 that the burden of compliance was placed firmly on parents rather than registrars.

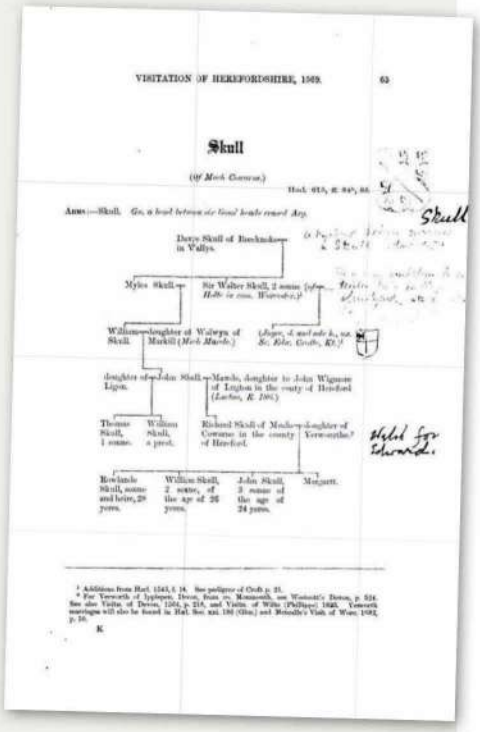
How accurate are pedigrees drawn up following visitations?

Q I attach the pedigree of the Skull family from the visitation of Herefordshire in 1569 *(pictured)*. How accurate are they? Other sources, especially Theophilus Jones' *A History of the County of Brecknock*, dispute it.
Steffi Stuart

A The heralds made periodic visitations of the English and Welsh shires from the late 1400s to the late 1600s, recording pedigrees of families entitled to use coats of arms. Their records are held at the College of Arms in London (**college-of-arms.gov.uk**), and copies made by deputy heralds and similar have been published by the Harleian Society (**harleian.org.uk**); many are available at TheGenealogist (**thegenealogist.co.uk**).

The Skull pedigree you sent is from FW Weaver's 1886 Harleian Society edition of the information collected in 1569 by Robert Cooke, Clarenceux King of Arms, one of the most prominent of all heralds. Besides names and places of residence, there are extra details – William Skull was "a pr[i]est"; Rowlande Skull, "sonne and heire", was 28, and so on. All this was written down by Cooke as someone knowledgeable about the family, probably the head, sat in front of him. Of course, the informant could make a mistake; Cooke could misunderstand; his work could be miscopied; Weaver could misread; or the typesetter could mis-set. Generally, however, such pedigrees should be considered accurate unless proved otherwise.

The pedigrees were used as the basis for almost all antiquarian work that followed, including Jones' which was written 250 years after Cooke took the information down from the families themselves. Neither Jones nor "other sources" (probably just people copying Jones) carry the same weight as Cooke's original work, unless they can cite substantial original, contemporary documentary evidence from wills, memorial inscriptions, parish registers and so on, proving a contrary position.
Anthony Adolph



VISITATION OF HEREFORDSHIRE, 1569. 63

Skull

(Of Much Cowarne.)

Arms:—Skull. Gu. a bend between six fleur bends ermin. Arg.

Davye Skull of Brecknokow in Vallys.

Myles Skull — Sir Walter Skull, 2 sonne (sylve Holte in com. Warwick.)

William — daughter of Walwyn of Markill (Much Marcle.) | (Roger, d. and sole h., m. Sir Rolr. Croft, Kt.)

daughter of — John Skull — Mawde, daughter to John Wigmore of Leighes in the county of Hereford (Lawton, E. 106.)

Thomas Skull, 1 sonne. | William Skull, a preest. | Richard Skull of Much — daughter of Cowarne in the county of Herefordshire.

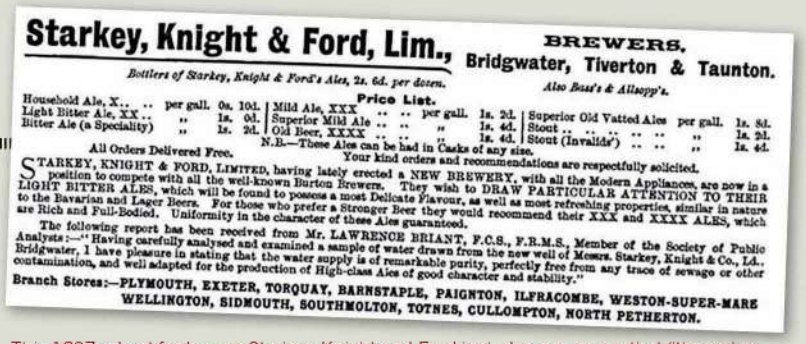
Rowlande Skull, sonne and heire, 28 yeres. | William Skull, 2 sonne, of the age of 26 yeres. | John Skull, 3 sonne of the age of 24 yeres. | Margaret.

Skull

Skull for Edward.

Big Question

How can I prove that Charles Bell is my great great grandfather?



Starkey, Knight & Ford, Lim., BREWERS. Bridgwater, Tiverton & Taunton.

Bottlers of Starkey, Knight & Ford's Ales, 2s. 6d. per dozen. *Also Basé's & Allsopp's.*

Price List.

Household Ale, X.. ..	per gall.	0s. 10d.	Mild Ale, XXX	per gall.	1s. 2d.	Superior Old Vatted Ales	per gall.	1s. 8d.
Light Bitter Ale, XX ..	"	1s. 0d.	Superior Mild Ale	"	1s. 4d.	Stout	"	1s. 2d.
Bitter Ale (a Speciality)	"	1s. 2d.	Old Beer, XXXX	"	1s. 4d.	Stout (Invalids')	"	1s. 4d.

N.B.—These Ales can be had in Casks of any size.

All Orders Delivered Free. Your kind orders and recommendations are respectfully solicited.

STARKEY, KNIGHT & FORD, LIMITED, having lately erected a NEW BREWERY, with all the Modern Appliances, are now in a position to compete with all the well-known Burton Brewers. They wish to DRAW PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THEIR LIGHT BITTER ALES, which will be found to possess a most Delicate Flavour, as well as most refreshing properties, similar in nature to the Bavarian and Lager Beers. For those who prefer a Stronger Beer they would recommend their XXX and XXXX ALES, which are Rich and Full-Bodied. Uniformity in the character of these Ales guaranteed.

The following report has been received from Mr. LAWRENCE BRIANT, F.C.S., F.R.M.S., Member of the Society of Public Analysts:—"Having carefully analysed and examined a sample of water drawn from the new well of Messrs. Starkey, Knight & Co., Ld., Bridgwater, I have pleasure in stating that the water supply is of remarkable purity, perfectly free from any trace of sewage or other contamination, and well adapted for the production of High-class Ales of good character and stability."

Branch Stores:—PLYMOUTH, EXETER, TORQUAY, BARNSTAPLE, PAIGNTON, ILFRACOMBE, WESTON-SUPER-MARE WELLINGTON, SIDMOUTH, SOUTHMOLTON, TOTNES, CULLOMPTON, NORTH PETHERTON.

This 1897 advert for brewer Starkey, Knight and Ford includes assurance that "the water supply is of remarkable purity… and well adapted for the production of High-class Ales"

Q My great grandfather, Charles Bell Baker, the town crier for Tiverton, Devon, has no father listed on his birth certificate. A newspaper report from August 1896 says that his mother, Maud Baker of Chapel Street, took his father, Charles Bell, a labourer from Kingston, near London, to court in the Borough Police Court, for maintenance. This Charles Bell had been contracted by Starkey, Knight & Ford & Co.

There were a couple of Charles Bells living in the Kingston area at the time, but DNA evidence suggests that I am connected to Charles Ernest Bell, a well-borer married to Annie Stemp, but later divorced. He died in 1898 of a brain abscess when Charles Bell Baker was about two years old.

I can't find any documents to prove that he is Charles Bell Baker's father – can you help?

Gillian Harris

GILLIAN HARRIS is struggling to prove the identity of Charles Bell Baker's father

A In 1895, Starkey and Knight, a sizeable West Country brewer, acquired the estate of Thomas Ford and Co. with its 40 pubs served by its brewery in Tiverton, Devon. Charles Ernest Bell was contracted to bring his boring skills to the town in 1896. There, he met Maud Baker and a child of the couple, Charles Bell Baker, was born in Tiverton on 11 July 1896.

However, Charles Ernest Bell was still married to his estranged wife, Annie Clara née Stemp, who had eloped to Chicago, USA, in 1893. He commenced divorce proceedings, and the 13-page file is on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**). The document was a pauper's cause, meaning the fees and expenses were waived in this instance.

He opened proceedings by swearing an affidavit on 9 October 1895, around the time that Maud would have first become aware of her pregnancy, so perhaps he intended to marry her.

By coincidence, the petition for the marriage's dissolution was filed on the day that Charles Bell Baker was born, 11 July 1896. The decree absolute was not forthcoming until 20 July 1897.

Charles Ernest Bell gave his address as 7 Elm Crescent, Kingston upon Thames, and stated that he was a well-borer. On page 12 we read that when he signed his petition back on 29 November 1895, it was "Sworn at Tiverton in the County of Devon".

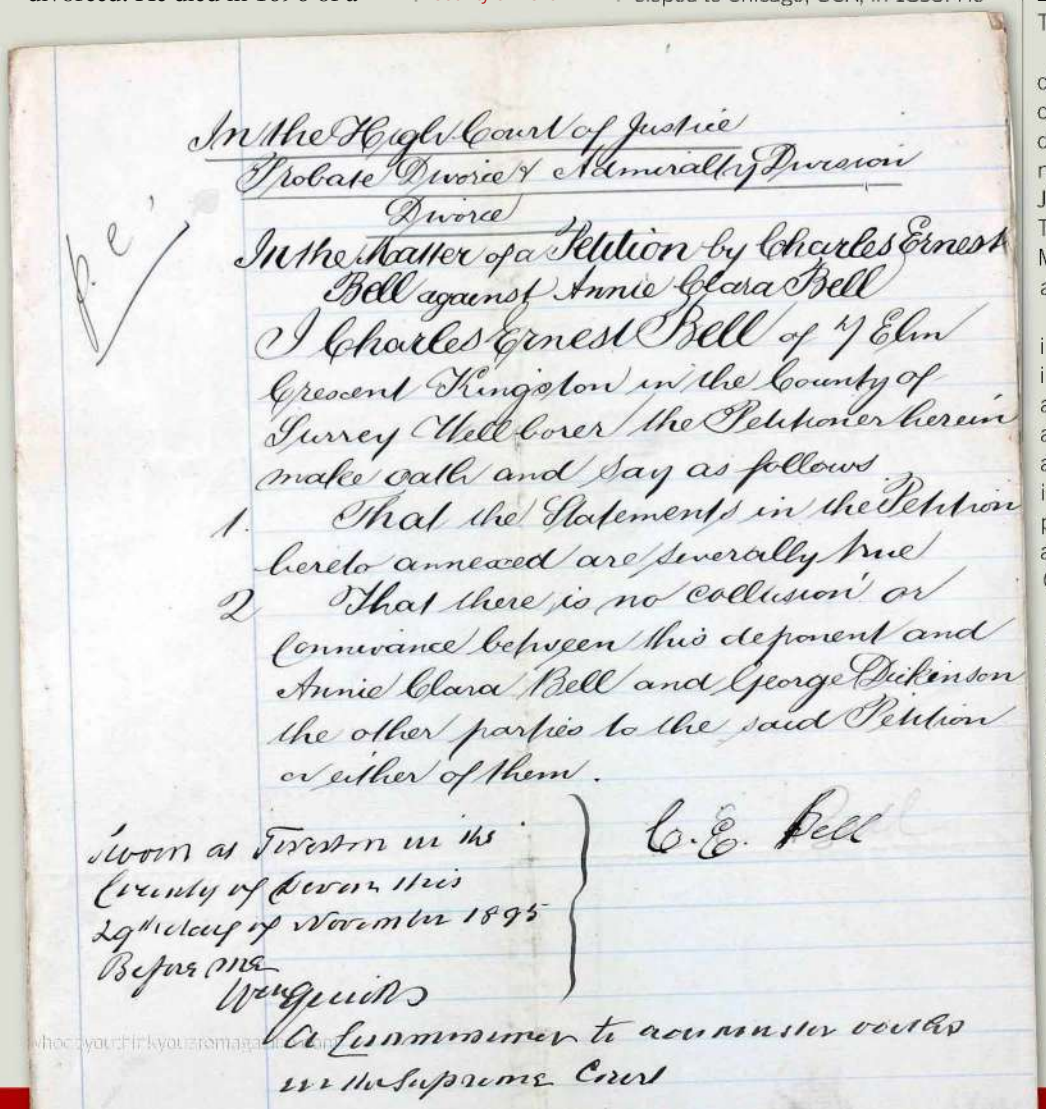
Attached to the petition by way of supporting evidence is a certified copy of the marriage certificate of the divorcing couple, which provides the name of the father of the petitioner: John Chinery Bell, a coachman. There is a photograph of him in Public Member Trees on Ancestry; his dates are 1825–1910.

Charles Ernest died young, just 29, in 1898, so there is no knowing how ill he was when Maud was taking legal action. He had been free to marry for a year when he died from a cerebral abscess of one month's duration. The informant was his brother George, present with him in several censuses at addresses that vary between Elm Crescent and Elm Road.

George was a well-borer too, an occupation that necessitated an itinerant lifestyle. Brewers required copious amounts of clear and pure water under pressure, and beer was considered a safer drink than water in many locations – not least because it was more thoroughly tested, as an advert from 1897 shows *(pictured)*.

This all suggests you were correct in your assumptions regarding the identity of this Charles Ernest Bell.

Steve Thomas



Page 12 of the divorce proceedings reveals that the petition was "Sworn at Tiverton in the County of Devon"

In the High Court of Justice
Probate Divorce & Admiralty Division
Divorce
In the Matter of a Petition by Charles Ernest Bell against Annie Clara Bell
I Charles Ernest Bell of 7 Elm Crescent Kingston in the County of Surrey Well borer the Petitioner herein make oath and say as follows
1. That the Statements in the Petition hereto annexed are severally true
2 That there is no collusion or connivance between this deponent and Annie Clara Bell and George Dickinson the other parties to the said Petition or either of them.

Sworn at Tiverton in the County of Devon this 29th day of November 1895 Before me

C. E. Bell

A Commissioner to administer oaths in the Supreme Court

What uniform is this soldier wearing?

Q The lady in this photo is my great grandmother, Emily Hicks (born 1873), but the soldier isn't my great grandfather, whom she married in the late 1890s. Can you identify his uniform?
Brenda Hough

A This is a lovely photograph, taken in Cirencester towards the end of the 19th century, of a soldier and his sweetheart, holding hands, in a formal studio shot. I'm inclined to think it's a picture marking an engagement.

I can't identify the soldier or his regiment but, if he was a Regular soldier, perhaps he became engaged without asking his colonel's permission? The colonel couldn't prevent it, but without permission the wife couldn't even enter barracks or travel with the regiment, which may have caused the wedding to be called off.

The Cirencester connection intrigues me: the 4th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment, was a Militia (part-time soldier) unit based there. Militiamen had six months' full-time army training, then returned to civilian life, were paid a retainer, attended an annual refresher camp, but were liable to immediate call-up in the event of war. The marriage rules didn't apply, because militiamen lived at home 11 months of the year.

Noting that Emily married William H Wiggins in 1896 (about the time of the photo), I checked the few records of the 4th Glosters at The National Archives (**nationalarchives.gov.uk**), but found no William Wiggins. Since the records are patchy, try checking with the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum (**soldiersofglos.com**) or Gloucestershire Archives (**gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/**), both in Gloucester.
Phil Tomaselli

1 UNIFORM
In the mid-1880s, infantry uniforms became standardised with a scarlet, seven-button tunic, dark-blue trousers and white belt with heraldic lion and unicorn motifs as well as the legend "Dieu et Mon Droit".

2 COLLAR BADGE
The collar badge is indistinct. It might be the Glosters' sphinx badge, but there are other possibilities.

3 CUFFS
The white 'jam pot' cuffs indicate he's an infantryman in an English regiment. By 1890, former signs that a man served in the Militia had disappeared, so it's possible that he's a militiaman.

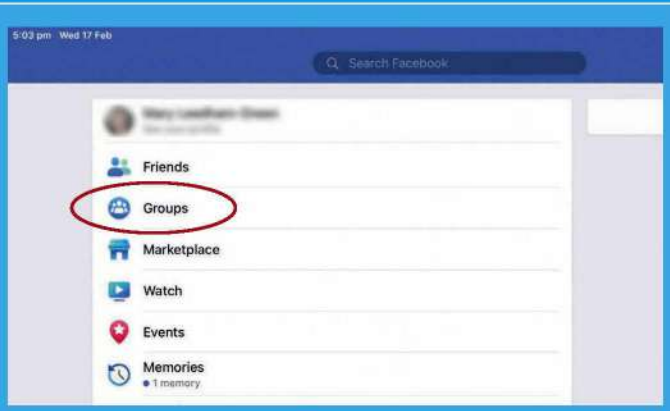
4 LACE
The woman has paid a great deal of attention to her appearance. There's a lot of lace in the picture, including fingerless lace gloves and, although it's almost certainly machine-made lace, it wasn't cheap. Clearly, this is an important occasion.

5 HAT
The size of her hat indicates that it's the late 19th century. I've a photograph of a soldier's wedding that was taken in 1901, and the ladies' hats are considerably larger, featuring very broad brims and more decoration.

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

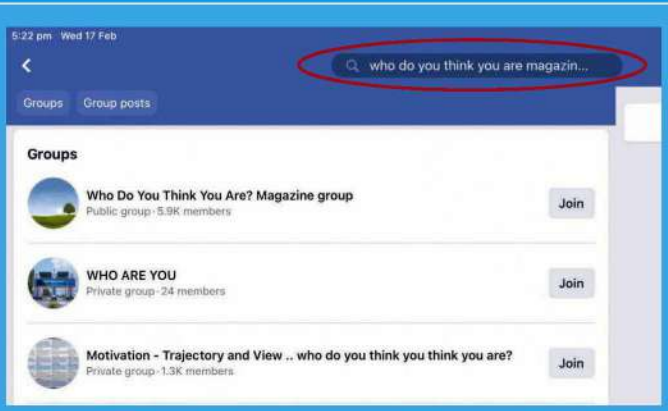
Join Our FACEBOOK GROUP

Did you know that we have a friendly Facebook Group where family historians can share new discoveries, ask for help or just chat about genealogy? If you haven't joined a Facebook Group before, don't worry, it's very simple!



1 Click On The 'Groups' Icon

From the Facebook homepage, click on the 'Groups' icon (this may be at the bottom of the screen on the mobile app or from the menu, or above your News Feed).

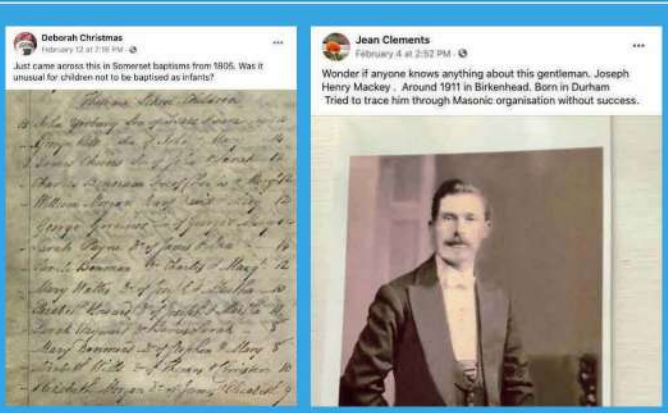


2 Search For Our Group

Search for the *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine* Group (click the magnifying glass), then click 'Join' next to the name. You will need to read and agree to our rules.

3 Wait To Be Added

We are then notified, and will add you as a member as soon as possible. The group is growing rapidly, but you shouldn't have to wait too long before you're approved.



4 Start Posting!

You can either upload your own query or respond to other people's posts. It's a great way to share your love of family history and get help with your brick walls.

Pharos Tutors

Guiding the route to your ancestors

Short topic-based **online courses** and **certificate programmes** in family history, local history and related topics.

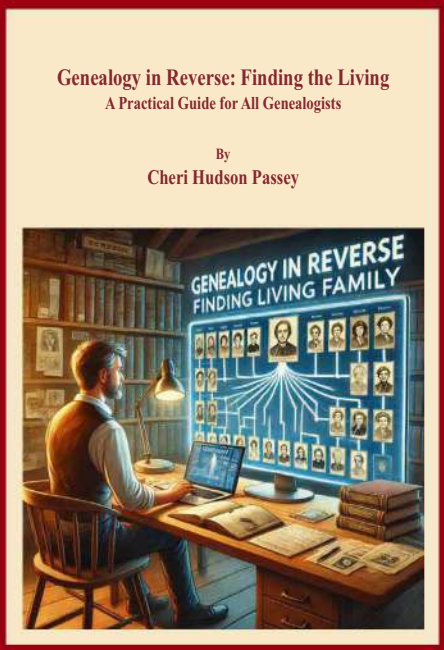
Flexible options to fit around your learning needs.

Learn from the experts

START YOUR JOURNEY TODAY

www.pharostutors.com

Genealogical.com



See our entire collection at

www.genealogical.com

But ORDER from www.amazon.co.uk, www.amazon.eu and other fine booksellers

"IT'S THE BEST COURSE OUT THERE."

"IT EXCEEDED ALL MY EXPECTATIONS."

IHGS THE SCHOOL OF FAMILY HISTORY

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE IN GENEALOGY

WWW.IHGS.AC.UK

+44 (0) 1227 768664

ENQUIRIES@IHGS.AC.UK

"THIS COURSE IS A MUST."

"JUST BRILLIANT."

"THE KNOWLEDGE I HAVE GAINED FROM IT IS ALMOST IMMEASURABLE."

ourmedia

Brilliant content you can trust

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE!

Your two easy ways to order

Visit **ourmediashop.com/MAY25HAQP**

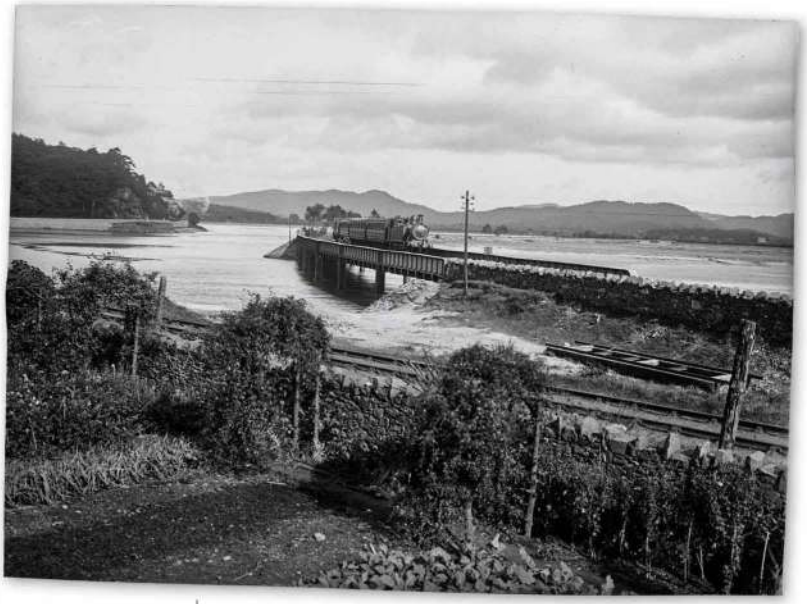
Call **0330 053 8660†**

quote code MAY25HAQP

*This offer closes on 31 December 2025 and is valid for UK delivery addresses and by direct debit only. The discounts shown are savings calculated as a percentage of the full shop price. For overseas rates visit www.ourmediashop.com.†UK calls will cost the same as other standard fixed line numbers (starting 01 or 02) and are included as part of any inclusive or free minutes allowances (if offered by your phone tariff). Outside of free call packages call charges from mobile phones will cost between 3p and 55p per minute. Lines are open Mon to Fri 9am – 5pm.

Finding Furness

Rosemary Collins learns about a heritage project from Cumbria



Father-and-sons photographers the Sankeys took this picture of Greenodd Viaduct in the 1910s

Three parish councils in the rural area of Furness in Cumbria – Egton with Newland, Mansriggs and Osmotherley – joined together to form the Parish Council of Egton with Newland, Mansriggs and Osmotherley in 2003, usually abbreviated to ENMO Parish Council. In 2024, the council launched a heritage project for residents to explore and celebrate the history of the region. The ENMO Heritage Project website is now online: **enmoheritageproject.org.uk**.

Project coordinator Barbara Hind says that the core of the project was 14 volunteers who each researched a particular village or hamlet: Arrad Foot, Broughton Beck, Greenodd, Mansriggs, Newland, Rosside, Penny Bridge, Plumpton and Spark Bridge. However, they had help from many other local residents and organisations.

The team received training and assistance from the staff at Barrow Archive Centre (**westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives/archives-centres/barrow-archive-centre**). Signal Film & Media (**signalfilmandmedia.com**), a charity also based in Barrow-in-Furness, allowed the project to use pictures from the Sankey Photography Archive, which contains more than 10,000 images depicting the local region between c1900 and the 1970s. Finally four members of the Furness University of the Third Age (u3a) Digital Photography Group (**furness.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/digital-photography/**)volunteered to take pictures that could also be published on the website.

"We'd seen some websites that are simply a series of research articles, and we decided we didn't want that – we wanted our site to be much more visual," Barbara says. "So I think we were all very pleased with the results we achieved."

The website is a fascinating, wide-ranging record of the history of the ENMO area over the centuries. It has articles, photographs, maps and presentations, as well as interviews with about 50 residents. Some were conducted by pupils from Penny Bridge Church of England Academy in Ulverston.

"Twenty children formed groups of five, and interviewed four local people," Barbara says. "It was absolutely fascinating to see the children grapple with the descriptions of a different world, with issues like no mobile phones, and playing out in the fields."

Some websites are simply a series of research articles. We didn't want that

The website covers the history of the area's main industries – chiefly farming, but also companies harnessing water power, including cotton and linen manufacture, bleaching fabric, milling flour, and producing iron ore. It also documents the major changes caused by the coming of the railways.

"The railways required embankments," Barbara says. "These changed the tidal flow of water from Morecambe Bay. Seawater was prevented from coming onto land in Plumpton. The port of Greenodd became inaccessible. Different industries then had to be started."

The interviews with residents also capture a vanished world. Wright Greatorex, aged 79, says of the hamlet Arrad Foot when he was growing up, "The Co-op bread van came on Monday and Friday, the Co-op mobile shop on Wednesday, Hutchinson's Butchers on Tuesday and Friday, and Mr Teasdale – fish, fruit and veg – also on Friday. Electric didn't come to the village until 1949, and we didn't get mains water until 1972. So, we all had dry toilets – earth toilets."

David Nelson, aged 72, says, "We ploughed the fields using a horse. The horse had a breastplate attached to shafts, which meant it could pull a plough or cart. When I was little, my dad used to fasten me on the horse with a skipping rope and I would drop off to sleep, while he was ploughing."

Barbara believes that the interviews were an important aspect of the project.

"The revelations about the long-vanished social life of the local residents, their experiences at work and the powerful influence of particular individuals, such as landowners and local businesspeople… you wouldn't get that in a history book."

TELL YOUR STORY

Share your local history project with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *rosemary.collins@ourmedia.co.uk*

Discover More

ENMO Heritage Project
w **enmoheritageproject.org.uk**

You can find out more about the project and the history of the area via its website.

SIGNAL FILM AND MEDIA

THE BIG PICTURE

Celebrating our ancestors caught on camera

GETTY IMAGES

Morris Minors

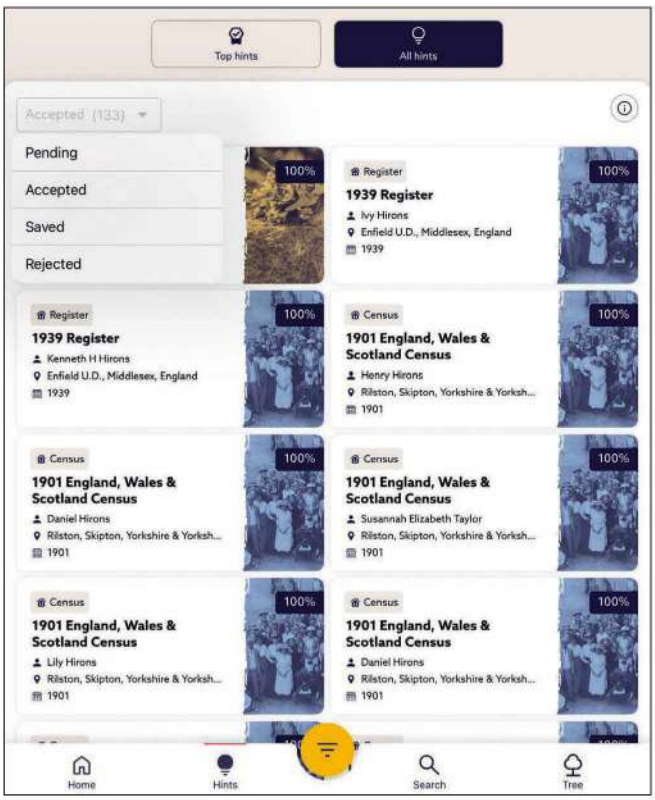
Morris dancers in the playground of Thomas Street Girls School, Limehouse, Stepney, East London, 1908

Although these pupils might look a bit like they're cult members enacting a weird ritual to summon a demon, there's nothing sinister going on in this picture – it's just harmless fun, and part of a distinguished, centuries-old English tradition. However, a certain Mr Kirby would not have approved.

According to a report that was published in the *Northampton Daily Echo* on 16 June 1909, the killjoy had attended a meeting at a school in Fenny Stratford, Buckinghamshire, during which he vainly objected to a plan to give the teachers instruction in morris dancing so they could pass it on to their pupils: "Mr Kirby entered a strong protest against this last ridiculous innovation and addition to the curriculum. Instead of teaching the children useful subjects and giving them a sound, plain education, they were being taught all sorts of fancy and absurd subjects."

So what is morris dancing? Historically performed in rural areas with distinctive styles that vary depending on the region, the folk dance involves a team stepping rhythmically in matching outfits. These incorporate items from a vast range of paraphernalia including face paint, rosettes, ribbons, waistcoats, sashes, clogs, boots, braces, hats, breeches, armbands, neckerchiefs, and rows of bells attached to leather pads worn on arms and legs. Dancers might also wield wooden or metal swords, sticks or, as in this old photograph, handkerchiefs.

The exact origins are obscure, but morris dancing was first recorded in the mid-15th century, migrated from courtly entertainments to the countryside, and experienced a major revival in the Edwardian period. You can find out more information from the websites of the English Folk Dance and Song Society (**efdss.org**) and The Morris Ring (**themorrisring.org**), while a 1947 newsreel on British Pathé's site contains footage of dancers strutting their stuff in Bampton in Oxfordshire (**tinyurl.com/bp-morris/**). The narrator proclaims that "tradition keeps the morris dance as fragrant as lavender", and who are we to argue.



Make the most of the hints on Findmypast

Nick Peers explains how to view, review and attach hints to your Findmypast family tree

Trying to keep on top of the ever-growing records on Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**) would be a nightmare were it not for the website's hints. Like other genealogical sites, Findmypast is constantly trawling through the people in your tree comparing the information you've already recorded to potential matches across all of its collections. These are then shared with you in the form of hints, helping steer you towards more information. Once this information is added to your tree, the site is then able to utilise it to track down other potential matches.

This month we'll show you how to best use Findmypast's hints to fill out the details of your family's past. Our step-by-step guide first examines how to explore, manage and incorporate hints on your smartphone or tablet. It's a great way to make productive use of your time when on the road for example. We'll then reveal some additional features you can unlock when accessing the site via a web browser on your computer (or your mobile device's web browser).

Note that while Findmypast will reveal hints from across all of its collections, you can only access and incorporate records that are available at your subscription level. Visit **findmypast.co.uk/account/subscription** for more information.

TOP TIP!

If the mobile app throws up an error when trying to accept a hint, check the person's profile – you should see that the hint has been added anyway.

1 Launch The Mobile App

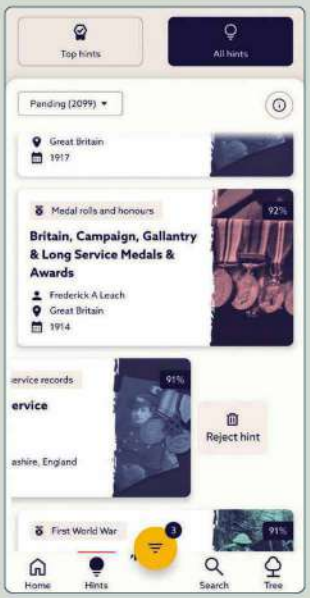
The most convenient way to view and review hints is from your smartphone or tablet using the free Findmypast mobile app for Android and iOS. After logging in on your phone, you'll see the 'Hints' button next to the 'Home' button at the bottom of the app window – tap it to get started.

2 View Current Hints

Findmypast divides the hints it's found into two categories on mobile: "Top hints" are those records determined particularly relevant for your research, while "All hints" spans all potential matches, labelled as "Pending". These are organised by record set, with the 1841 census the first in the list. Scroll down to go through them all.

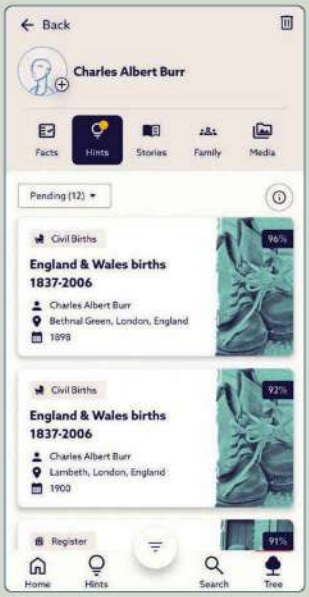
3 Filter Your Hints

Wading through hundreds or thousands of hints can be laborious, but you can tap the circular yellow button containing an inverted triangle next to 'Hints' to bring up a list of filters, allowing you to narrow your list by record type such as census, First World War or newspapers. Tap each type to select it with a tick before tapping 'Close'. The list will update to show only those records that match your selection.

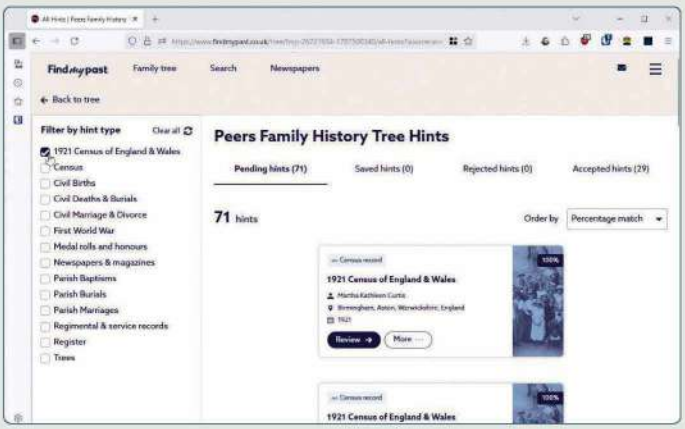


4 Remove Obvious Mismatches Each summary gives you basic information: the recorded person's name, their birthplace and the date of the record. Matches are also given a percentage according to the likelihood that they're correct. Before reviewing them in detail, note that you can quickly file records for reviewing later by swiping them to the right; if they're clearly the wrong person, swipe the record left to reject it.

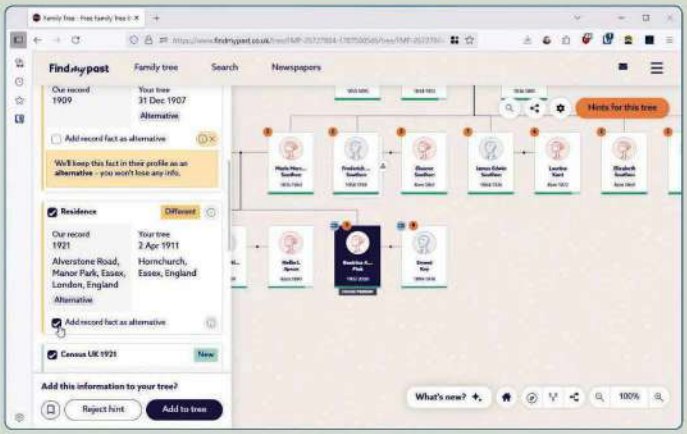
5 Review Matches In Detail Tap on a record to review it. This works in the same way as it does when you search for or select individual records: the record's information is shown side-by-side with that in your tree. Different information is highlighted – if this is a match, untick any information you don't want transferred and tap 'Accept'. You can also 'Save for later' or 'Reject' (remove) the match.



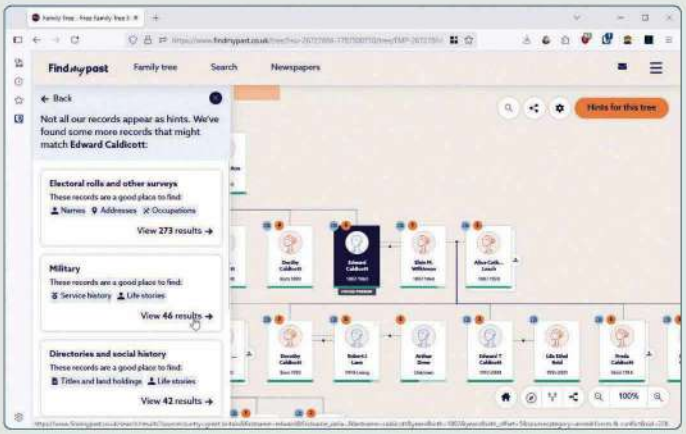
6 Search Hints By Individual You'll be shown a confirmation message, complete with shortcuts to go to their profile page as well as an 'Explore more hints' button. Tap this and you'll be taken to the 'Hints' tab on their profile, allowing you to explore further potential matches for that person. You can also get an overview when browsing the 'Tree' view (look for the number in the orange circle above each person).



7 Check Hints Via Your Browser You can also check for hints when logged into **findmypast.co.uk** via a web browser. There's a handy 'View hints' shortcut on the main page and, once you've clicked it, you can more easily filter your matches by record type using the options in the left-hand pane as shown.



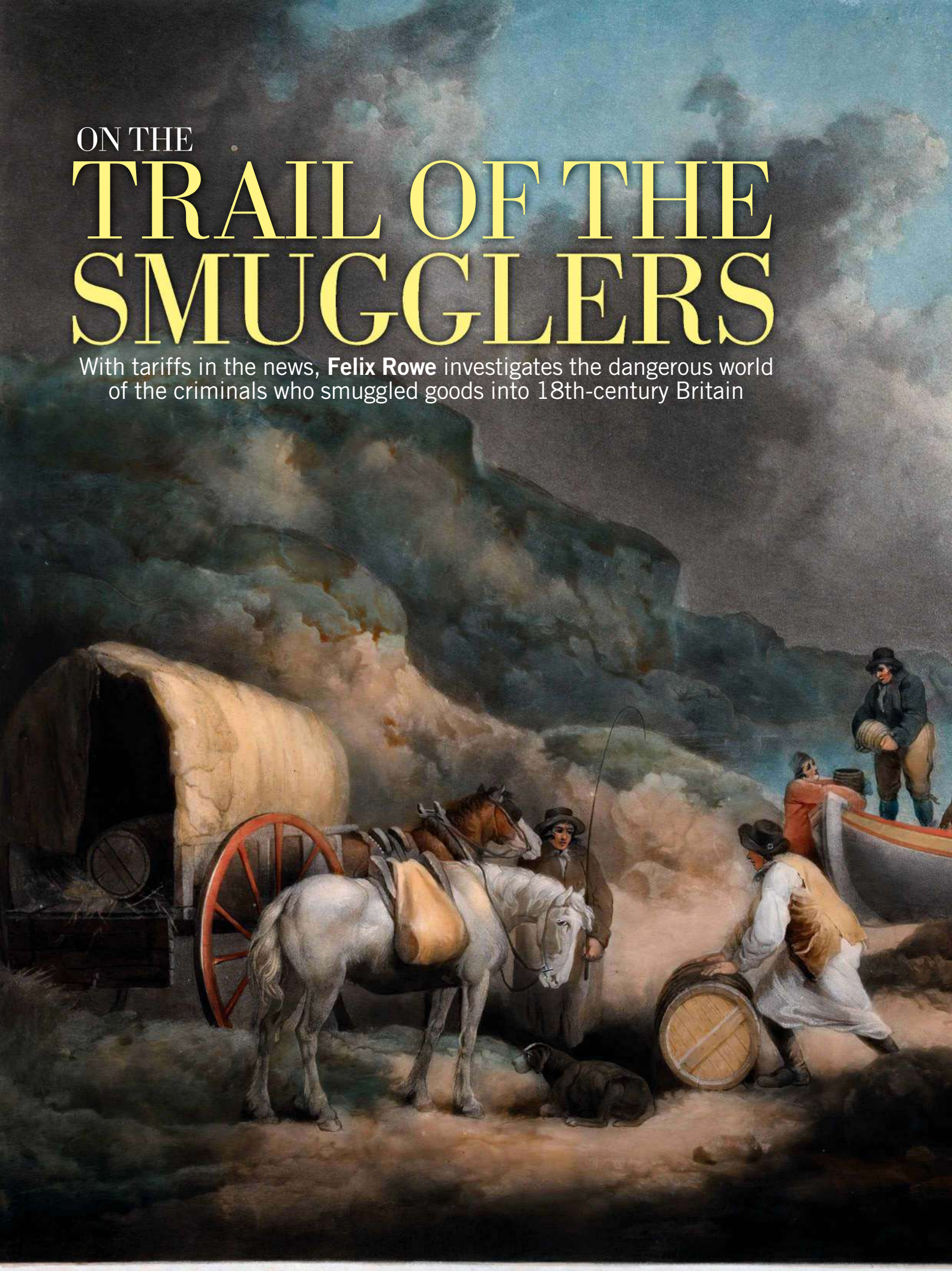
8 Add Alternative Facts Unlike the mobile app, accessing the site via your browser allows you to record conflicting information – such as residential addresses on different census returns – as alternative facts. Simply tick the 'Add record fact as alternative' box next to any such information before clicking 'Add to tree'.



9 Review Other Potential Records On a browser you also get a shortcut to other potential matches when viewing a person's profile via the 'Family Tree' screen. Click 'Records' and you'll see a list of record sets and potential matches based on a looser search. Click one to access the search-results page and explore further.

ON THE TRAIL OF THE SMUGGLERS

With tariffs in the news, **Felix Rowe** investigates the dangerous world of the criminals who smuggled goods into 18th-century Britain



GETTY IMAGES

A mezzotint of smugglers offloading contraband from the end of the 18th century

Visit any waterside tavern along the coast of Britain and you're likely to hear some yarn about its smuggling past, no doubt embellished with each sip of ale: barrels clandestinely offloaded onto a moonlit beach and whisked away up the hill for safekeeping, perhaps via a secret tunnel. These romanticised tales are plentiful, but often even the most fanciful accounts contain a kernel of truth.

In reality, during the golden age of smuggling in the 18th century, entire communities on the south coast were complicit in the trade. The extent of the operation was truly staggering. By the mid-1700s, an estimated 20,000 people were involved, while over half the tea consumed in the country was brought in illegally.

Smuggling was by no means a new phenomenon, but circumstances provided the perfect conditions to thrive. It was inevitable: where there's war, there are taxes. And where there are taxes, there are plentiful opportunities to evade them.

Customs duties were first introduced on the export of wool during the 13th century under Edward I, to raise much-needed capital to fund his war against the French (a recurring theme). Prior to this point, all cross-border trade was essentially 'free'. Duties were now collected by newly appointed customs officials at designated ports. Those reluctant to part with their profits to furnish the king's purse swiftly realised that they could simply load their cargoes a little further up the coast on some secluded beach instead. And so, the smuggler was born.

Commodities At A Cost

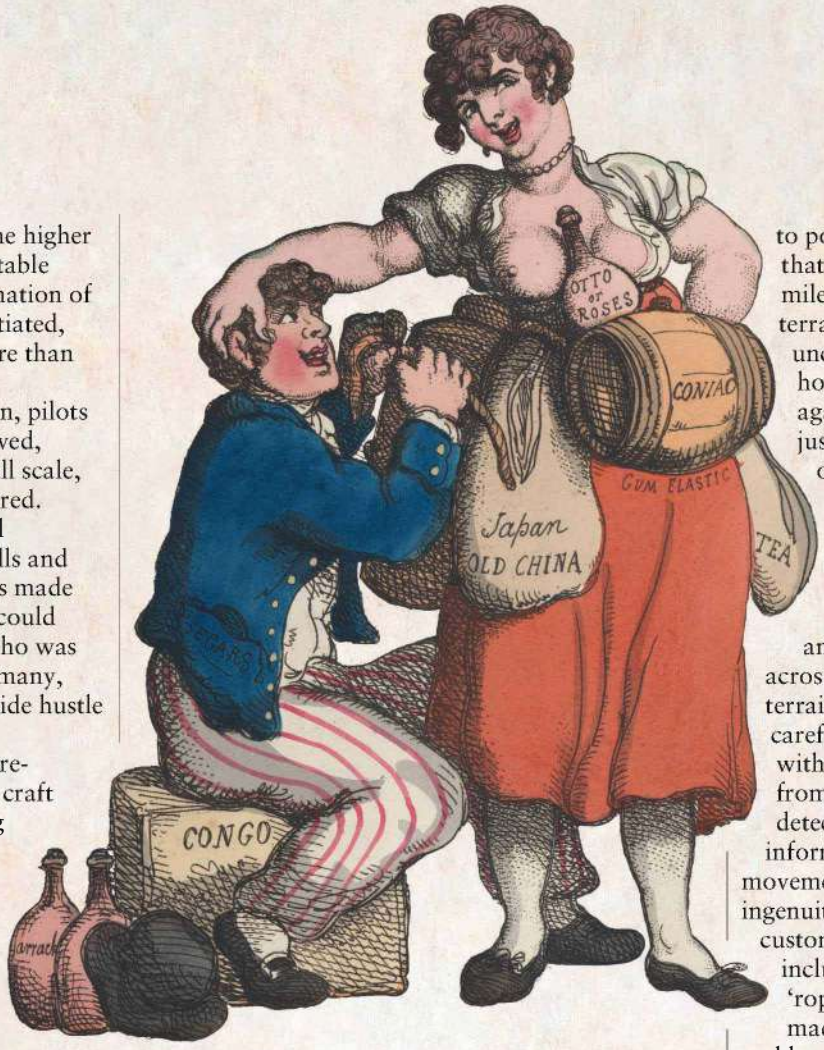
Over time, duties came to include commodities imported into the country: wine, spirits, lace, silks, tobacco and tea. Come the 18th century, a succession of international wars – if not against the old foe, France, then the Dutch, or the rebelling American colonies – needed to be financed, and customs duties

soared accordingly. The higher the taxes, the more profitable smuggling became. The nation of tea drinkers had to be satiated, and there were those more than willing to oblige.

Thousands of fishermen, pilots and ferrymen were involved, often operating on a small scale, dipping in as needs required. Familiarity with the local waterways, seafaring skills and international connections made them ideal smugglers. It could be difficult to pinpoint who was or wasn't involved – for many, smuggling was a casual side hustle to a legitimate trade.

The development of fore-and-aft rigging in sailing craft was critical in facilitating smuggling. This novel innovation, imported from the Dutch, allowed vessels to be more manoeuvrable in any wind direction or state of tide. This meant that a lugger could slip into port and evade detection more easily compared with traditional square-rigged ships, which had to rely on favourable conditions.

The Crown's measures against smuggling often proved highly ineffective, a fact that opportunists exploited to their advantage. The Government's preventive service involved both onshore officers in a 'land guard' who patrolled on horseback, and officers on the water. The service was divided into regional teams, each controlling a specific stretch of coast. Yet the land guard was woefully under-resourced to police an entire coastline that stretched for many miles of rugged or remote terrain. Smaller beaches went unchecked, and officers on horseback were impotent against a cargo being landed just across a river on the opposing shore.



Both men and women were involved in smuggling. This 1810 caricature shows a woman being 'rigged out' with goods from around the world

Impressive Feat

The logistical feat was hugely impressive – all achieved by human and animal power alone, across choppy seas and hostile terrain. Rendezvous were carefully choreographed, with sophisticated signals from boat to shore to evade detection. Smugglers were well informed of the revenue men's movements and applied great ingenuity to conceal goods from customs officers' inspections, including hollowed-out masts, 'ropes' that were secretly made out of tobacco leaves, and barrels with false bottoms.

Authorities' effectiveness depended on the capability and integrity of the individuals involved. Facing slim odds and slimmer morale, it wasn't uncommon for customs men to turn a blind eye or, even worse, take part themselves. Take, for example, the sloop *Swift*, appointed to patrol the waters of the Solent between the Isle of Wight and the mainland. By November 1729, its regular trips to smugglers' haven Guernsey in the Channel Islands aroused suspicion that the crew were themselves stocking up on contraband goods, under the guise of fulfilling official duties.

A significant challenge was combating the popular attitude towards smuggling: many considered it a service rather than a crime. In coastal communities practically everyone stood to benefit, from the farm labourers doing the heavy lifting, to local lords and businessmen – even the parson sipping cut-price tea.

It flourished into a well-established economy with a sophisticated infrastructure. Inland networks for disposing of the contraband were as critical as

Isaac Gulliver 1745–1822

How one smuggler fought to conceal his misdeeds

Born in Semington, Wiltshire, the son of a smuggler, Isaac Gulliver went into the family trade. Based out of Dorset, he ran a fleet of 15 luggers, with operations stretching from the Solent to south Devon. Contraband landed at Poole was regularly stowed in the tower of St Andrew's Church, Kinson, Bournemouth, and wear on the stonework from the ropes and barrels is still visible today.

Gulliver ran several inns, providing a degree of cover and an outlet to dispose of his contraband. He grew rich from the trade, investing his fortune in land and ostensibly respectable business, becoming a successful wine merchant and banker. A natural entrepreneur, Gulliver possessed "great speculating genius" according to a 1788 report from the Custom House in Poole. Many colourful tales surround Gulliver, such as faking his own death to avoid capture. He styled himself as a noble free trader who never took another man's life. In 1782, he received the King's pardon, by paying for the provision of two substitutes to join the Royal Navy on his behalf.

His home of Howe Lodge in Kinson, which has since been demolished, allegedly contained a secret room accessed through the chimney. Another property in Wimborne has been commemorated with a blue plaque by the town council.

GETTY IMAGES | WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

sea-hardy mariners. Besides those physically handling the goods, many more otherwise facilitated or financed the operations.

Wealthier smugglers retained lawyers (for obvious reasons), doctors (to patch up wounds following a scrape with the revenue man) and clergy (whose literacy was employed in settling accounts). Convicting smugglers was almost impossible because often entire communities – magistrates included – were complicit or unwilling to testify, out of collusion or fear of reprisal.

Criminality In Every Class

Even the East India Company and its passengers were complicit. E Keble Chatterton's *King's Cutters and Smugglers 1750–1855* (George Allen & Company, 1912) provides a comprehensive introduction to the source material, and is freely available from the Internet Archive at **tinyurl.com/arch-kings-cutt**. He explains that "rich and poor, high and low, there was no class that did not endeavour to engage in smuggling either directly or indirectly". Prosperous packet-ship captains amassed some of their considerable wealth through undeclared private cargo while on official business. These upstanding citizens were unlikely to have considered themselves criminals. For them, it was simply a harmless perk of the job, carried out with an air of respectability, via an official port in daylight.

But it wasn't quite a victimless crime, practised by heroic Robin Hood figures outwitting the authorities for the common good. Some smugglers carried not only contraband across the English Channel, but continental spies. Other smugglers were violent outlaws who terrorised all within their paths to line their own pockets. A particularly gruesome story, recounted by Chatterton, tells of a customs officer named May who had his tongue cut out, followed by both ears, one of which was nailed to the Cork Exchange.

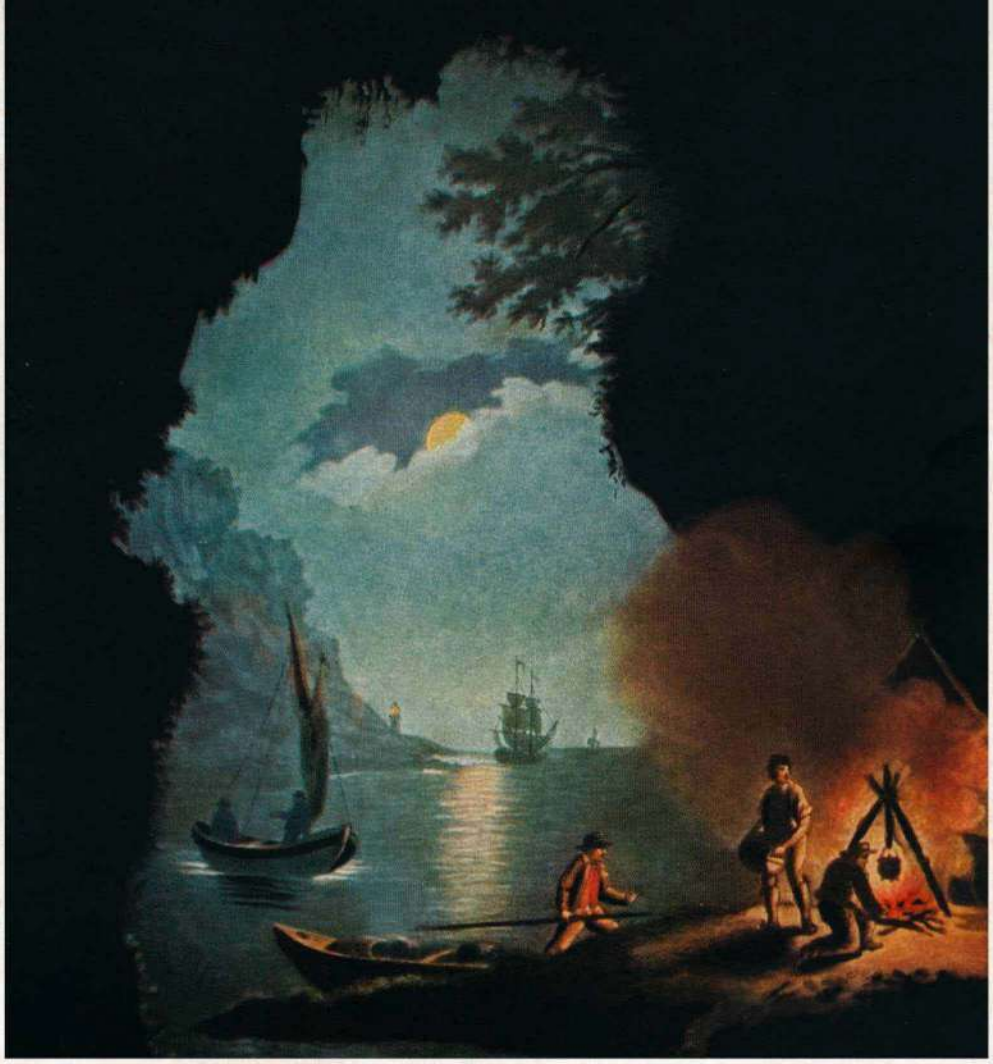
Villainous smugglers in an illustration from a 1913 novel

By the mid-18th century, large organised gangs dominated the south coast, led by ruthless crime lords. The notorious Hawkhurst gang of Kent were particularly brutal. Documentary evidence describes horrific disfigurement of informants and customs men in December 1744, a scandal that shocked newspapers nationwide. Three years later, a customs officer named William Galley was apparently buried alive after a beating, while the informer, a shoemaker named Daniel Chater, was thrown down a well and stoned to death. So appalling were these crimes that they hastened the perpetrators' downfall. A campaign led by Charles Lennox, the 2nd Duke of Richmond, to stamp out the gang is detailed in his account *A Full and Genuine History of the Inhuman and Unparrallell'd Murders of Mr William Galley… and Mr Daniel Chater* (R Walker, 1749), available from the Internet Archive at **tinyurl.com/arch-full-gen**. Finally, the reign of terror ended when ringleaders Arthur Gray and Thomas Kingsmill were hanged in 1748 and 1749 respectively.

A customs officer named May had his tongue cut out, followed by both ears

The Government made various attempts to quell smuggling ▶

GETTY IMAGES



A rather romantic depiction of smugglers from a 1925 history book

through legislation. The 1718 Hovering Act prohibited smaller vessels from loitering off the coast, while further legislation restricted voyages across the English Channel for boats with more than four oars – neither to much avail. The controversial 1736 Act of Indemnity introduced the death penalty for injuring officers, and hefty fines for bribery. In 1746, smugglers' names were published in the *London Gazette*, alongside an ultimatum to either turn themselves in or be outlaws. But even the threat of capital punishment didn't prevent the terrors described above.

An Economic Solution

Ultimately, the only meaningful response was to remove the incentives for smuggling. In 1745, and again in 1784, tea duties were slashed. However, some cuts were short-lived, fluctuating in response to the latest international conflict, and smugglers could simply substitute one contraband cargo with another. By the 1840s, however, free-trade policy effectively ended their dominance.

Furthermore, Martello towers – coastal forts constructed during the Napoleonic Wars to defend against a possible French invasion – acted to deter smuggling, while the founding of HM Coastguard in 1822 finally provided a more effective, organised preventive service for monitoring the coast.

Changing attitudes may have influenced public perception too, as the Victorian moral conscience developed. Smugglers' escalating violence in response to government measures likely contributed towards the diminishing local support. Once seen as community benefactors, they increasingly became outcasts.

Today, remnants of smuggling can still be found along Britain's coastline. Coastguard cottages at Prussia Cove, west Cornwall, were built to keep watch over the beach, while old cart tracks from the contraband cargo scar the rocky cliffs below. There is a likely smugglers' tunnel in Hayle, and by Falmouth's dockside an old brick chimney stands as a reminder of the contraband tobacco destroyed there. Meanwhile, place names such as Brandy Cove in the Gower Peninsula, South Wales, and countless pub names across the country are testament to the rum runner's enduring legacy.

FELIX ROWE
writes about history and music for magazines, and edits non-fiction books

Resources

Take your research further

BOOKS

Hawkhurst: Murder, Corruption, and Britain's Most Notorious Smuggling Gang
Joseph Dragovich
The History Press, 2023
Dragovich provides a summary of the darker side of smuggling.

Memoirs of a Smuggler
John Rattenbury
J Harvey, 1837
Rattenbury was based in Beer, east Devon, and his account of his exploits can be downloaded from the Internet Archive (**tinyurl.com/arch-mem-smug**).

The Autobiography of a Cornish Smuggler
John B Cornish (editor)
Gibbings & Co., 1894
With his brother John, AKA 'the King of Prussia', Harry Carter led a notorious gang operating out of Prussia Cove, west Cornwall. This revealing primary source is drawn from Carter's memoirs, and freely available from the Internet Archive (**tinyurl.com/arch-auto-smug**).

MUSEUMS & ATTRACTIONS

JAMAICA INN
a **Bolventor, Bodmin Moor, Cornwall PL15 7TS**
t 01566 86250
w **jamaicainn.co.uk**
Immortalised in Daphne du Maurier's 1936 novel, this inn was a notorious smuggling haunt. You can still stay there today, and it houses a small but well-furnished Smuggling Museum.

SMUGGLERS ADVENTURE
a **St Clement's Caves, Hastings, East Sussex TN34 3HY**
t 01424 422964
w **smugglersadventure.co.uk**
Explore a network of caverns once frequented by smugglers.

WEBSITE

SMUGGLERS' BRITAIN
w **smuggling.co.uk**
Here you'll find crucial information and links to further reading.

GETTY IMAGES

MERCHANDISE

BACK ISSUES

If you've missed an issue, here's a chance to complete your collection – and find out how to subscribe on page 22

Issue 227
FEBRUARY 2025
- Using timelines
- Burial records
- London criminals
- East Yorkshire kin

Issue 228
MARCH 2025
- Historic maps
- Prisoners of war
- Aristocratic links
- Northern Ireland

Issue 229
APRIL 2025
- Cousin marriage
- Military Police
- Feet of fines
- Hampshire kin

Issue 230
MAY 2025
- VE Day
- The British in India
- English Civil War
- Norfolk kin

Issue 231
JUNE 2025
- Using social media
- French ancestry
- London resources
- West Midlands kin

FROM £4.79

Issue 232
JULY 2025
- How to use AI tools
- Parish registration
- The Irish Famine
- Berkshire kin

WALL CHART

Commemorate your family tree with our wall chart

FROM £4

Share your family history with your loved ones by displaying it on our popular wall chart, which measures 864 x 572mm. It is printed on thick, matt paper and comes folded.

MAGAZINE STORAGE

Order a file today to preserve your issues

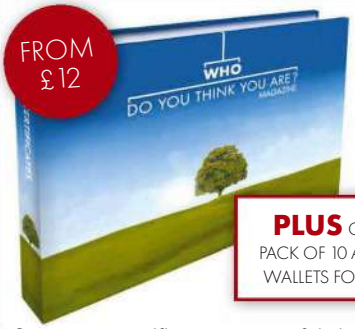
Keep your collection of *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine* in perfect condition by ordering one of our files. Each one stores a year's worth of magazines, and is suitable for issues dated November 2018 onwards.

FROM £8.49

CERTIFICATE BINDER

Keep your precious archive safe for posterity

FROM £12



PLUS ORDER A PACK OF 10 ACID-FREE WALLETS FOR JUST £5

Store your certificates away safely in an exclusive *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine* certificate binder, which includes five acid-free plastic A4 wallets to protect your most valuable documents.

SUBSCRIBERS! LOG IN & **SAVE UP TO 25%**

	SUBSCRIBER*			NON-SUBSCRIBER		
	UK	EUROPE	R.O.W.	UK	EUROPE	R.O.W.
BACK ISSUES	£4.79	£5.59	£6.39	£5.99	£7.35	£8.35
CERTIFICATE BINDER	£12	£14.25	£15	£16	£19	£20
	CODE WHCERTBIDA					
WALL CHART	£4	£5	£5	£5	£5	£5
	CODE WHWALLA					
MAGAZINE STORAGE	£8.49	£9.45	£10.80	£9.99	£10.50	£12
	CODE WHMAGBOXA					

CALL **03330 162120**

OR VISIT **OURMEDIASHOP.COM/BACKISSUES-WDYTYA**

OR **OURMEDIASHOP.COM/OFFERS/MERCHANDISE** FOR WALL CHARTS, STORAGE AND BINDERS

*You will need your subscriber number to access discounts online and by phone. UK calls will cost the same as other standard fixed-line numbers (starting 01 or 02) and are included as part of any inclusive or free minutes allowances (if offered by your phone tariff). Outside of free call packages call charges from mobile phones will cost between 3p and 55p per minute. Lines are open Monday to Friday 9am–5pm. If calling from overseas, call +44 1604 973728

'I Introduced Dad To The Half-Brother He Never Knew Existed'

Jennifer Wallig spent decades tracing her father's birth family, eventually solving the case with the help of the 1930 US census, a DNA test – and a private eye. Interview by **Gail Dixon**

Puzzles fascinate me, so when I discovered that my father was adopted I longed to know more of the story. The quest began in 1989 before the Web, and has involved determination, heartache, slammed doors and brick walls. It ended, however, with a beautiful discovery.

My dad Dayton Louis Horner was born on 20 April 1948. He grew up in Walnut Creek, California, with his parents Howard and Virginia (Gini) Horner. Dad served in the United States Marines Corps during the Vietnam War, and suffered post-traumatic stress disorder.

JENNIFER WALLIG lives in California, USA, and is an office manager and genealogist. Learn more at **blurredlinesgenealogy.com**

In 1972, Dad married my mother Jeanne in California, and I was born a year later. Mom and Dad divorced when I was three, but Dad and I remained close.

The revelation that he was adopted came totally out of the blue, and he didn't want to discuss it. I was a young teenager at the time, and found the news very hard to process.

A while later, I visited Grandma Gini and broached the subject. She told me that Dad's birth mother was an unmarried teenager from San Jose in California, who was also called Virginia. Who was she? Was she still alive, and did we have a large extended family?

My Brick Wall

By the early 1990s, I desperately wanted to find Dad's birth mother and he gave me his blessing. Grandma Gini presented me with a bundle of papers including Dad's birth certificate, which falsely declared Howard and Gini to be his birth parents.

There was also a series of warm letters between Grandma Gini and Virginia Whitley, Dad's birth mother. Virginia lived in San Francisco, and had placed Dad with the Horners temporarily in the hope she could later reclaim him. Clearly that never happened.

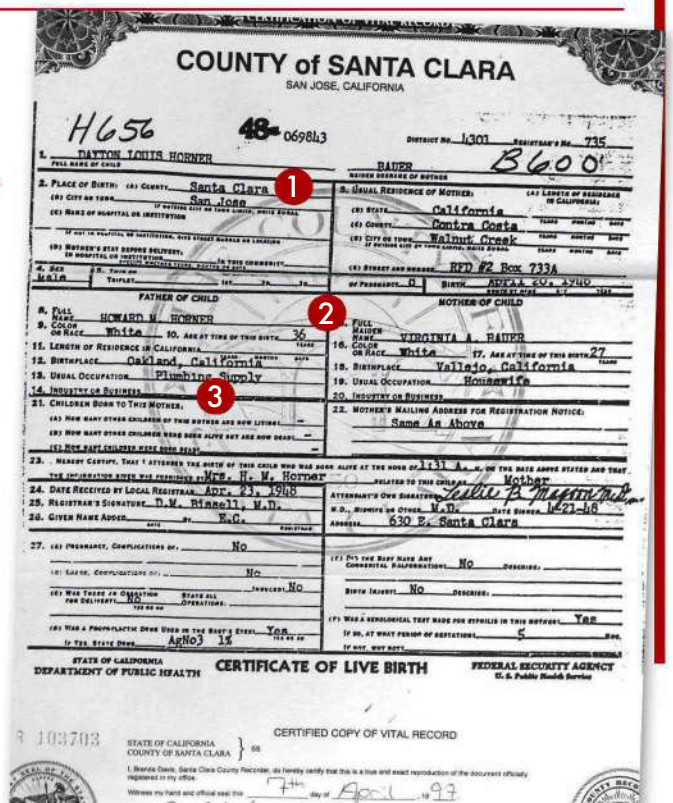
Adoptions in California were 'closed' in 1948, which meant that the records were sealed. I wrote to the Department of Social Services (**cdss.ca.gov/adoption-services/adoptee-information/adoption-records**) in the 1990s, but they denied our petition to open the file and it is still closed today.

My Eureka Moment

I spent many years searching for Virginia Whitley, and got a breakthrough when the 1930 US census record was released in 2002. Eureka! There she was, aged two, living with her parents Frank and Bessie, and sisters Marjorie and Imogene in Tulare, California. I did a lot of work tracing the family forward and was able to communicate with

Birth Certificate, 1948

Jennifer's father's birth certificate contained some red herrings



COUNTY of SANTA CLARA
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

H656 48- 069843 District No. 1301 Registrar's No. 735

1. DAYTON LOUIS HORNER — Full name of child
Maiden surname of mother: BAUER B600

2. Place of birth: (a) County: Santa Clara (1) (b) City or town: San Jose
(c) Name of hospital or institution
(d) Mother's usual residence: (a) State: California (b) County: Contra Costa (c) City or town: Walnut Creek (d) Street and number: RFD #2 Box 733A
4. Sex: Male 5. Twin or triplet
Number of previous children: 0 Birth: April 20, 1948

FATHER OF CHILD
8. Full name: HOWARD W. HORNER (2)
9. Color or race: White 10. Age at time of this birth: 36
11. Length of residence in California
12. Birthplace: Oakland, California
13. Usual occupation: Plumbing Supply
14. Industry or business
21. Children born to this mother: (3)
(a) How many other children of this mother are now living:
(b) How many other children were born alive but are now dead:
(c) How many children were born dead:

MOTHER OF CHILD
15. Full maiden name: VIRGINIA A. BAUER
16. Color or race: White 17. Age at time of this birth: 27
18. Birthplace: Vallejo, California
19. Usual occupation: Housewife
20. Industry or business
22. Mother's mailing address for registration notice: Same As Above

23. Hereby certify that I attended the birth of this child who was born alive at the hour of 1:31 A.M. on the date above stated and that the information above was furnished me. Mrs. H. W. Horner — Related to this child: Mother
24. Date received by local registrar: Apr. 23, 1948
25. Registrar's signature: D.W. Hinnell, M.D.
26. Given name added: By: N.C.
Attendant's own signature: Leslie B. Thompson M.D. M.D., midwife or other: M.D. Date signed: 4-21-48 Address: 630 E. Santa Clara
27. (a) Pregnancy, complications of: No
(b) Labor, complications of: No
(c) Was there an operation for delivery: No Specify: No Operations:
(d) Was a prophylactic drug used on the baby's eyes: Yes If yes, state drug: AgNO3 1%
(e) Did the baby have any congenital malformations: No Describe:
Birth injury: No Describe:
(f) Was a serological test made for syphilis in this mother: Yes If so, at what period of gestation: 5 Res. If not, why not:

STATE OF CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH — CERTIFICATE OF LIVE BIRTH — FEDERAL SECURITY AGENCY U. S. Public Health Service

G 103703 STATE OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA } ss. CERTIFIED COPY OF VITAL RECORD
I, Brenda Davis, Santa Clara County Recorder, do hereby certify that this is a true and exact reproduction of the document officially registered in my office.
Witness my hand and official seal this 7th day of April 1997

1 Birthplace
Dayton's place of birth – San Jose, in Santa Clara County – tallied with the information that Jennifer had been given.

2 Parents' Details
Howard and Virginia Horner are recorded as Dayton's birth parents, but they were his adoptive parents. Their age, occupation and "color or race" are included as well.

3 Children
The certificate records other interesting information, such as how many other children the mother has given birth to, plus whether there were any complications with the pregnancy.

Left to right: Valerie and Max Frazier with Dayton Horner, Max's half-brother, and Dayton's daughter Jennifer

Marjorie's daughter Ernestine, who didn't know that her aunt Virginia had had a baby adopted.

I also discovered that Virginia's mother died in 1931, so she was placed with a foster family called Corsaw who had an older son. When I had my DNA tested there was a connection to the Corsaws.

After almost 20 years of sleuthing, I still couldn't find Virginia, so in 2008 I hired a private investigator. Her discovery would change our lives.

My Breakthrough

The investigator Monda revealed that Virginia Whitley married Wilford Frazier in 1951, and they moved to Washington State. However, my heart plummeted when Monda told me that Virginia had died in 1991.

She then said, "There's something else: Virginia had a son in 1953. His name is Max Frazier, and he lives in Texas." I felt stunned at the news that Dad had a half-brother, and I had an uncle.

Max lived in Azle, Texas, and Monda found the address of a PO box for a business that he ran there. I went through a lot of soul-searching before contacting him.

I wrote a long letter to Max explaining our connection, and enclosed photographs of Dad. After three weeks I began to lose hope, but one day at work an email popped up in my inbox. It was from Max.

He had been surprised to receive my letter, of course, but he could see the likeness between him and Dad, and wanted to discover more. We began a long and friendly correspondence.

Meeting Max

A few days later I told Dad that he had a half-brother. He sounded only mildly surprised, although he was intrigued to hear that he and Max looked alike. Dad began corresponding with Max as well, and in 2009 the two of us arranged to meet Max and his wife Valerie in Texas. Dad and I flew in to Dallas Fort Worth International Airport, and hugged them in the Arrivals lounge.

We started noticing similarities between Dad and Max straight away – even how they sat, right leg crossed over left, leaning back. The two men shared so many passions too, including music, hunting and fishing.

Finding Max was an extraordinary blessing. He gave Dad a bond of brotherhood that he'd never known possible, and they spent many happy times together over the years.

Both Dad and Max have since passed away, but I still feel a profound sense of accomplishment for having put the two of them together.

I've written a book about my search called *Finding Max* (Lioncrest, 2024). I hope it inspires other people to seek out their long-lost relatives.

Reader Tips

Jennifer's advice for finding an adoptee's biological relatives

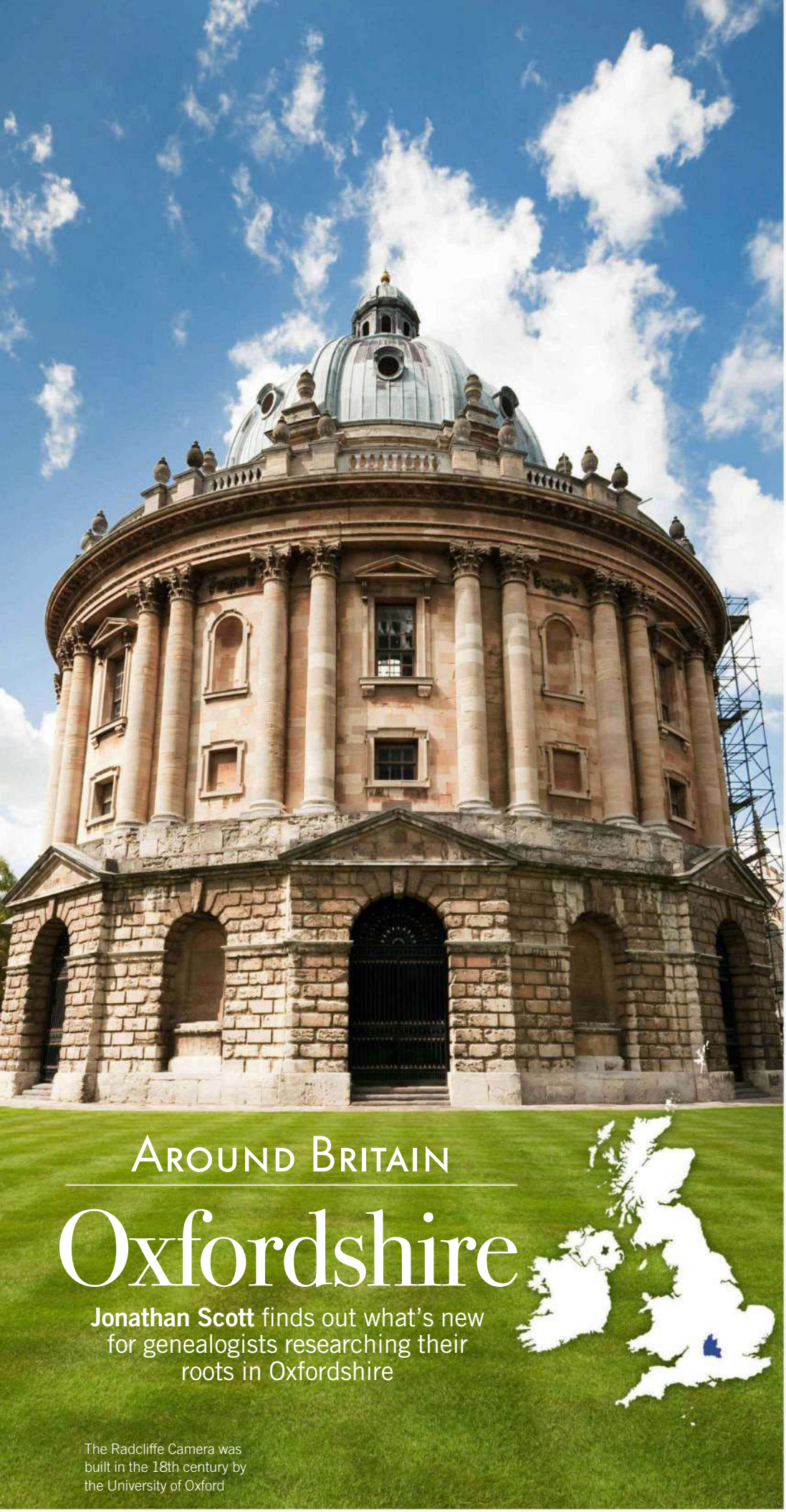
- It can take a long time to trace a birth family, so be patient.
- Keep track of every lead in notebooks and journals.
- Be sensitive when you contact your newly uncovered relations, because you don't know how they will react.

HAVE YOU BROKEN THROUGH A BRICK WALL?

Share your family story with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*

Jennifer's book *Finding Max* was published by Lioncrest last year (RRP £14.99)



Around Britain

Oxfordshire

Jonathan Scott finds out what's new for genealogists researching their roots in Oxfordshire

The Radcliffe Camera was built in the 18th century by the University of Oxford

Before the Oxford City Police force was established in 1869, policing the city had been a joint operation between constables of the University of Oxford at night and constables of the city's watch during the day. The archives of the new force, today preserved at the Oxfordshire History Centre (OHC; **oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/museums-and-history/oxfordshire-history-centre**), include 'occurrence books' that detail daily incidents encountered by the men, and provide "an invaluable portrait of the late-Victorian and Edwardian city, and beyond".

Writing on the history centre's blog, archivist Katherine Kinrade describes most incidents as being fairly minor in character – including "teenagers reprimanded for snowballing or playing gambling games such as 'banker' in the streets. Drunk and disorderly behaviour or nuisances caused by students were not uncommon, often broken up by officers or on the arrival of a University Proctor." These range from assaults to pranks, such as stealing knockers from college doors and coating Broad Street's figurehead statues with red paint.

Less pleasantly, "One bizarre student 'rag' reported at some length in March 1922 involved the release of a sack full of rats in Carfax, with chaotic scenes ending in several broken windows and a lot of dead vermin!"

Rich In Repositories

If you're researching the education of a former University of Oxford student then there are a number of possible sources. Indeed according to the Oxford Archivists' Consortium (**oac.web.ox.ac.uk**), a support network founded in 2001, the city contains the largest concentration of archival repositories in south-east England. Oxford University Archives (**www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/universityarchives**) holds the administrative records of the university itself, which date from its founding in 1214, and include charters, statutes and title deeds, as well as departmental and

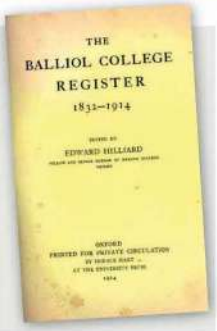
GETTY IMAGES

Free Resources

Jonathan's picks include parish registers, hearth-tax returns and a college register

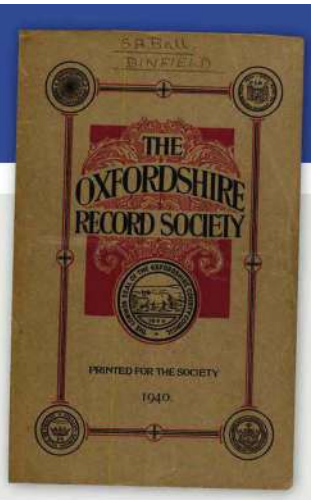
College Register
w tinyurl.com/arch-balliol

Balliol is one of three University of Oxford colleges with claims to be the oldest – the others being Merton and University College. The Internet Archive includes a 'Who's Who' of Balliol alumni back to 1832 and still living in 1914 when the book was published.



Hearth-Tax Returns
w tinyurl.com/ors-pub

Oxfordshire Record Society's site includes 71 volumes that are free to download such as hearth-tax returns (1665), protestation returns (1641–1642) and an index of "persons in Oxfordshire deeds" (1878–1963).

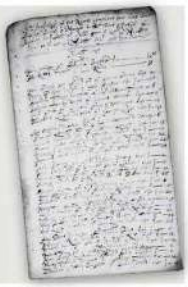


Newspaper Material
w tinyurl.com/hs-papers

Via the site Heritage Search you can view biographical photos and cuttings digitised from the *Oxford Mail* and *Oxford Times*.

Parish Registers
w bit.ly/fs-oxon-reg

FamilySearch contains indexes and images of Church of England parish registers from Oxfordshire covering 1539–1904.



Victoria County History
w bit.ly/vch-oxon

The Oxfordshire volumes of the authoritative Victoria County History contain detailed information about individual parishes.

faculty records. But for student life you will need to identify the college your relation attended. The consortium guide at **oac.web.ox.ac.uk/college-archives** has pages on every university college. You'll soon find that many have their own websites and catalogues, often with name-rich finding aids.

As the country marks 80 years since the end of the Second World War, it's worth remembering the role that Oxfordshire played in the defence of Britain. Oxford itself became a base for civil servants from the ministries of food, information, works and the Foreign Office, alongside personnel from the War Office, Admiralty, Air Ministry, MI5 and Bletchley Park. The county became home to numerous training airfields for glider pilots and bomber crews, while Hurricanes and Spitfires were repaired at a depot in Cowley. University colleges became military hospitals and evacuee centres, quadrangles were converted into vegetable plots, and the Bodleian Library (**www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk**) housed treasures from Parliament and national museums. Despite all this activity, Oxford itself was never bombed by German forces.

The Bodleian was the original custodian of the county's parish records, until all diocesan, archdeaconry and deanery collections were transferred to the former Oxfordshire Record Office in 1984. Today the OHC preserves 3,725 registers for 289 parishes, but there are some gaps to watch out for.

Registers for parts of surrounding counties that joined Oxfordshire in 1974 have remained in the care of where they were originally deposited. This includes the Vale of White Horse and parts of Berkshire south of the River Thames. There are records created by college chapels that don't always ▶

Motor manufacturer William Morris prototyped his first car at this Cowley garage in 1912

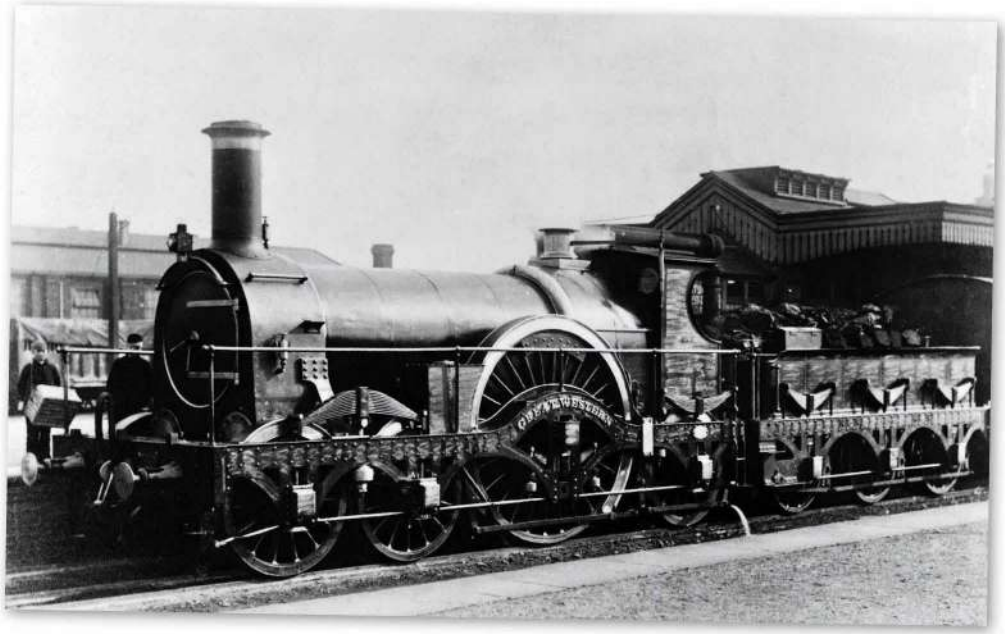
GETTY IMAGES

appear where you'd expect. Some parishes, especially in the city, have also ceased to exist. For example, Oxford St Martin merged with Oxford All Saints before the majority of the church was demolished in 1896 (local landmark the Carfax Tower had been part of the building). Later this parish would merge with St Michael's at the Northgate, while All Saints Church was converted into the library for Lincoln College in 1975.

Ancestry Asset

If all this sounds intimidatingly complicated, don't worry. Thanks to a project funded by Oxfordshire Family History Society (**ofhs.uk**), several million parish register records have been scanned, indexed and made available via Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk/search/places/united_kingdom/england/oxfordshire**).

These are split into pre- and post-1813 records – the year that George Rose's Act came into effect, introducing preprinted, standardised baptism, marriage and burial registers.



A Great Western Railway Iron Duke locomotive in Didcot, c1890

The society's website has been expanded and updated since our last visit to the area in 2021. Members can now use 'BOND' – the Big Oxfordshire Names Database – which includes names drawn from transcribed baptisms, banns, marriages, burials, memorial inscriptions and quarter-sessions material. There's also a database of transcribed wills at **wills.oxfordshirefhs.org.uk**, which is available to all and as of May this year includes the names of 8,897 testators. To view a transcript you can use either the index of testators or the index of "persons mentioned".

The OHC's website has undergone some changes too. Centre manager Mark Priddey said that the Heritage Search (**heritagesearch.oxfordshire.gov.uk**) was relaunched in 2023, "replacing and greatly expanding" on the original 2006 version, and now boasting a catalogue with more than one million records.

"This edition is linked to a new historic mapping platform, adding a new dimension to the presentation of our collections and digital content. The underlying principle is to provide a federated catalogue of resources held by Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council. The home screen allows you to run either a Quick Search or Advanced Search across all heritage datasets, or you can search or browse just one dataset by clicking on its dedicated tile on the homepage."

Running a test with the surname Scott led to 1,159 hits that could be filtered by various datasets. This included a general 'people index' (1791–2011) of names mined from local newspapers, which turned up a number of death notices, obituaries, announcements and longer articles. Others include a Poor Law names index (1588–1928), coroner inquest files, soldiers register, and business index (1791–2010).

This is where you might find references to occupations, from weavers to blanket-makers, brewers to engineers, farmers to solicitors. The centre also preserves archival material from globally famous car manufacturer Morris Motors, including minutes, reports, membership lists and accounts for the Morris Motors 25 Club for employees with at least 25 years' service.

Finally the Heritage Search can help you find nonconformist ancestors through lists of all non-Anglican registers after 1837. Since Oxfordshire falls between two Catholic archdioceses, records might be found in either the Birmingham or Portsmouth archdiocesan archives.

WATCH OUT!

Make sure you check if the parish you're researching was part of Oxfordshire before 1974, because this may determine which county collection you need to use.

LOCAL INDUSTRY

Early's Of Witney

The Early family made blankets for centuries

Early's blanket factory in Witney, photographed in 1898

The small town of Witney became famous for blankets that were exported all over the world. Various branches of the Early family were involved in the trade, and you can read about the brand's complicated origin story at **http://www.witneyblanketstory.org.uk/wbp.asp**. Oxfordshire History Centre looks after an archive relating to Early's of Witney including wage books and a series of apprenticeship indentures (**heritagesearch.oxfordshire.gov.uk/records/B1**).

GETTY IMAGES

OXFORDSHIRE DIRECTORY

ARCHIVES & LIBRARIES

Oxfordshire History Centre

a **St Luke's Church, Temple Road, Cowley, Oxford OX4 2HT**
t 01865 398200
e *oxhist@oxfordshire.gov.uk*
w **oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/museums-and-history/oxfordshire-history-centre**

The OHC has parish registers and wills, court and coroners' records, school material, census records, Poor Law records, photographs, newspapers, maps and property deeds, estate/family records, plus records of businesses; its catalogue is at **heritagesearch.oxfordshire.gov.uk**. The centre also holds the Oxfordshire Health Archives (**oxfordshirehealtharchives.nhs.uk**), catalogued at **discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/a/A13531587**.

Angus Library And Archive

a **Regent's Park College, Pusey Street, Oxford OX1 2LB**
t 01865 288156
e *angus.library@regents.ox.ac.uk*
w **theangus.rpc.ox.ac.uk**

Here you'll find records for the Baptist Missionary Society, the Baptist Union of Great Britain and other Baptist organisations. At **theangus.rpc.ox.ac.uk/family-history/** you can explore details of over 5,000 missionaries. Note that the Angus will be closed for 10 months between January and October 2026.

Bodleian Libraries

w **www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk**

The University of Oxford's library service runs 26 libraries across the city, and all sorts of resources are available via Digital Bodleian (**digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk**). Recently digitised material includes Registrum Collegii Pembrochiensis, a handwritten register of fellows, scholars and degrees at Pembroke College back to 1678.

Oxford College Archives

w **oac.web.ox.ac.uk/college-archives**

If you're researching a former student at the University of Oxford, this page has guides to the various colleges' archives.

Oxfordshire Libraries

w **oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordshire-libraries/find-library**

This is an A-to-Z list of libraries across the county. All of them provide free access to Ancestry Library Edition (**ancestry.co.uk**) and Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**), while many preserve local-history material.

Royal Berkshire Archives

a **9 Coley Avenue, Reading, Berkshire RG1 6AF**
t 0118 937 5132
w **royalberkshirearchives.org.uk**

Some parishes in modern Oxfordshire were formerly in Berkshire. As a result parish material can be found here.

Westminster Oxford Research Network

w **wesleysoxford.org.uk/category/research-resources/ocmch**

The network was founded in 2024 following the closure of the Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History. A portion of the centre's collection, particularly the reference library of the Wesley Historical Society, is being made available at a new reading room at Wesley Memorial Church on New Inn Hall Street (**wesleymem.org.uk**). There is more information at **ocmch.wordpress.com**.

GROUPS & SOCIETIES

Oxfordshire Family History Society

w **ofhs.org.uk**

The society has produced several online findings aids. The best tool for members is BOND – the Big Oxfordshire Names Database – which draws on volunteer-compiled data from a variety of sources. Free tools include a probate database and rolls of honour from the world wars.

Oxfordshire Local History Association

w **olha.org.uk**

Here you'll find details of more than 80 groups in Oxfordshire.

MUSEUMS

Banbury Museum

a **Spiceball Park Road, Banbury OX16 2PQ**
t 01295 236165
e *enquiries@banburymuseum.org*
w **banburymuseum.org**

Displays include the English Civil War and costume back to the 17th century. There's also the Rosemarie Higham Library, which contains more 1,000 local-history books and publications.

Heritage Hunter

w **heritagehunter.co.uk/museums-in-oxfordshire/**

This web page lists many local and independent museums across the county.

Soldiers Of Oxfordshire Museum

a **Park Street, Woodstock OX20 1SN**
t 01993 810210
e *engagement@sofo.org.uk*
w **sofo.org.uk**

The museum's library and archival store holds regimental War Diaries, journals, letters and photographs. At **sofo.org.uk/soldiers/soldier/** you can search a database of nearly 123,000 soldiers and officers.

The Oxfordshire Museum

a **Fletcher's House, Park Street, Woodstock OX20 1SN**
t 01865 897519
w **oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/museums-and-history/oxfordshire-museum**

The museum is situated in an 18th-century house. Note that the Museums Resource Centre in Witney houses the county collections relating to archaeology and history, and is open by appointment (**oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/museums-and-history/oxfordshire-museum/our-collections**).

WEBSITES

Ancestry

w **bit.ly/anc-oxon-collection**

Ancestry has parish register material for most pre-1974 Oxfordshire parishes.

Findmypast

w **bit.ly/fmp-oxon**

Holdings include digitised local newspapers such as the *Oxford Journal* and *Banbury Guardian*.

Nurse's letter, c1920

Neasa Roughan from the Royal College of Nursing Archives shares a loving letter between nurses Interview By Rosemary Collins

For centuries, LGBTQ+ people were forced to live in hiding, facing legal persecution and social stigma. Many were unable to be open in their relationships, and their LGBTQ+ identities are lost to history. However, the Royal College of Nursing Archives (RCNA) holds the remarkable set of records of Cathlin Cecily du Sautoy and Hermione Blackwood – two women who were both dedicated nurses and in a decades-long romantic relationship, and were even able to adopt children together in the 1920s. Neasa Roughan, archive specialist at the RCNA, tells us what a letter from the collection reveals about their lives.

They informally adopted two orphans whose mother had been a patient

Who Were Cathlin And Hermione?

Cathlin Cecily du Sautoy was born in 1878 in Yorkshire and Hermione Blackwood was born in 1879 in Ireland, the daughter of Ava and Frederick Hamilton-Temple-Blackwood, 1st Marquess of Dufferin, who was a former viceroy of India and governor-general of Canada. Both women became nurses, and subsequently worked for the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses. They were also in a long-term romantic relationship.

During the First World War, both women went to Europe, and somehow managed to get posts together almost everywhere they went: the Ulster Hospital in Lyon in France, the Hospital La Panne in Belgium, and the Astoria Hotel Hospital in Paris. Cathlin also was instrumental in setting up the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) Standish House hospital in Stroud, Gloucestershire.

After the war ended, their commitment to humanitarian work continued. Cathlin took on leadership roles in the reconstruction efforts in France, particularly in Reims, where she worked under the French and American Red Cross. Hermione also remained with her in France, focusing on maternal and child welfare in the devastated regions. Their efforts were recognised with numerous accolades. Cathlin received the Médaille de la Reconnaissance Française (Medal of French Gratitude), the Médaille d'Honneur des Épidémies (Medal of Honour for Epidemics) and the Plaque of the Compagnie de Sauveteurs de Reims (Company of the Rescuers of Reims), while Hermione won the Silver Médaille de la Reconnaissance Française.

In the early 1920s, Cathlin and Hermione informally adopted Victor and Yvette, two orphaned children whose mother had been a patient in France. The family returned to England and initially lived in Overton, Hampshire, before moving to Beechey Cottage near Hampstead Heath. Hermione, though no longer practising as a nurse, still served on various nursing committees and remained involved in the British College of Nurses, which had been set up by Ethel Bedford Fenwick in 1926. Cathlin remained active in public service and was elected to the board of guardians for the Central Ward of St John's Parish, Hampstead. Both women also played their part during the Second World War, serving as Air Raid Precautions wardens.

Hermione died in 1960, and Cathlin in 1968. We now hold their personal papers, badges and medals.

Who Sent The Letter?

The letter was written from Hermione to Cathlin in about 1920, while she was on holiday at the seaside town of Étables in southern France with Yvette and Victor – whose nickname was 'Hiddy', short for 'hideous'! We think Cathlin was still at work in Reims or Blerancourt, setting up district-nursing and maternal-health services in a country still devastated by the war. Hermione begins by saying, "I was delighted to hear your news about Miss Morgan's suggestion. How delightful if that came off & I feel she's a reliable person so it may." "Miss Morgan" was their friend Anne Morgan, vice president of the American Committee for the Devastated Regions in France. Her "suggestion" was for the committee to finance healthcare provision in Reims, employing both women in senior positions.

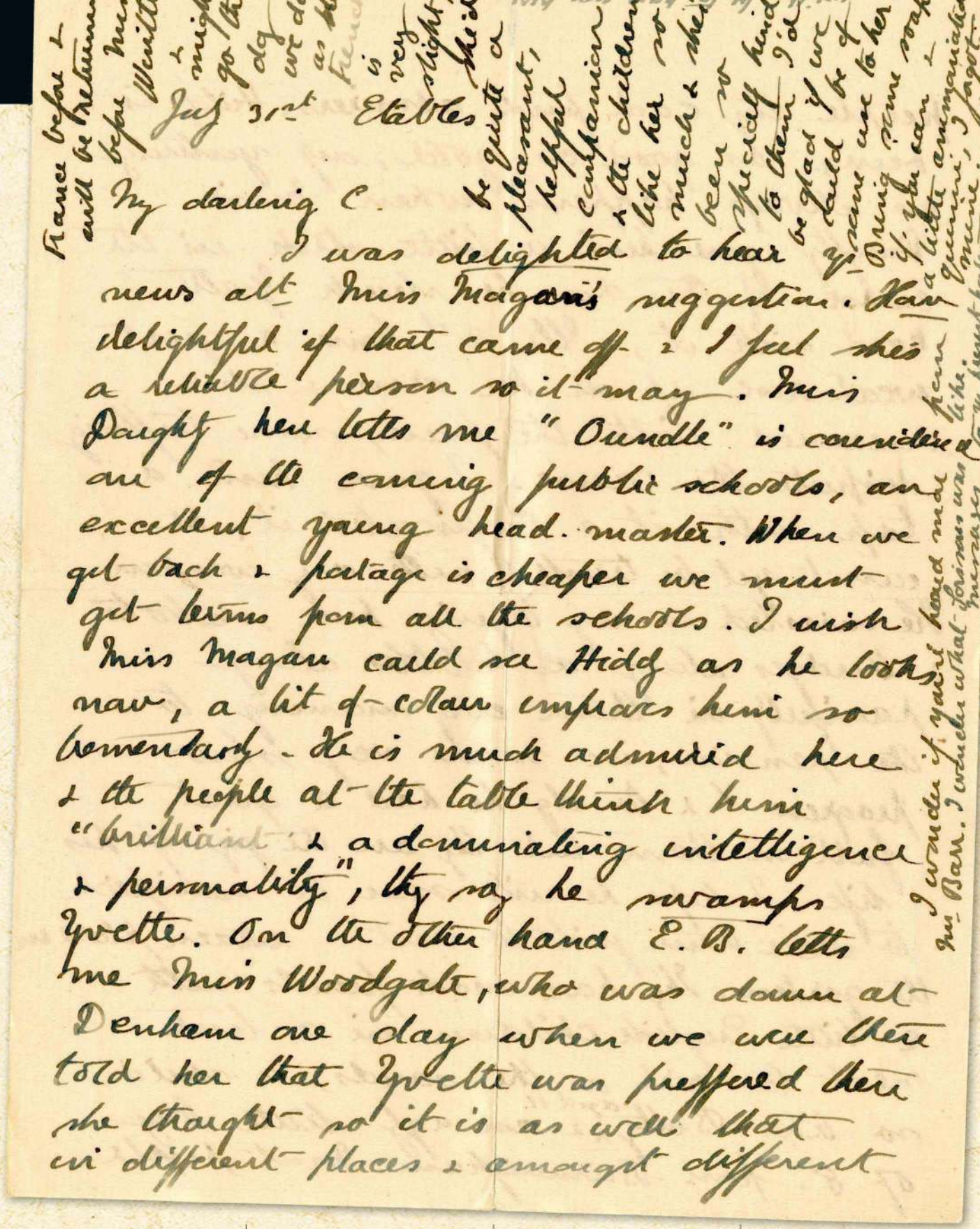
Hermione addresses the letter to "My darling C" and says how much she's looking forward to Cathlin joining them on holiday. It shows a great deal about the details of their life together and their day-to-day concerns, including the children.

Hermione evidently needs a sense of humour to cope with the frustrations of being on holiday with children, saying 'Hiddy' "is being good as gold" today, but yesterday "when Miss Doughty gave him a little stick in the course of the day he struck Yvette

Visit Us

Royal College Of Nursing Archives
a 42 South Oswald Road, Edinburgh EH9 2HH
e *archives@rcn.org.uk*
w **https://www.rcn.org.uk/library/archives**

The archive is open Monday to Thursday, 9.30am–4.30pm, by appointment only. You can also explore the college's Digital Archive at **rcn.access.preservica.com/**.



France before I will be returning before Mrs Whitt... I might go to the dog we do as the French is very slight the is

July 31st Etables

be quite a pleasant, helpful companion & the children like her so much & she has been so specially kind to them I'd be glad if we could be of some use to her. Bring some work if you can & a little amusing Queenie; I forgot Queenie, I forgot to put it in the first letter n.b. Have plaid

My darling C.

I was delighted to hear news abt Miss Magan's suggestion. How delightful if that came off & I feel she's a reliable person so it may. Miss Daughy here tells me "Oundle" is considered one of the coming public schools, an excellent young head-master. When we get back & passage is cheaper we must get terms from all the schools. I wish Miss Magan could see Hildy as he looks now, a bit of colour improves him so tremendously. He is much admired here & the people at the table think him "brilliant" & a dominating intelligence & personality", they say he swamps Yvette. On the other hand E.B. tells me Miss Woodgate, who was down at Denham one day when we were there told her that Yvette was preferred there she thought so it is as well that in different places & amongst different

Mrs Barr. I wonder if you'll have made friends with Joinson was here yesterday & I wonder what for. I wonder if you'll like.

hard with it… he can't yet be trusted with any weapon".

She adds that he insisted on her buying him sabots (a type of traditional French clog): "He… trudges along & hobbles along painfully in them every morning to the pension, we make very slow progress & today he had a great fall in them but they are the joy of his life."

Why Did You Choose It?

I picked the letter because it gives an insight into the personal lives of Cathlin, Hermione and their family, and the world they lived in. When we work with the archives of people who lived long ago, it can be difficult to get a feel for them as people rather than a collection of facts and dates. This letter, with all its mundane details about laundry, mealtimes and trains, gives us an idea of their everyday family life and the love felt between the women and their children.

What Other Documents Do You Hold?

Our archive can essentially be split into two. One is the archive of the Royal College of Nursing as an institution, from its founding in 1916 up to today. The other part of the archive is our personal-papers collection, which includes certificates, badges, photos, diaries, memoirs, and correspondence from nurses. We also hold an oral-history collection documenting nurses' lived experiences in their own words.

REVIEWS

The latest books on history and genealogy, plus apps, podcasts and websites

How To Research Your Second World War Ancestors

WW2 RESEARCH

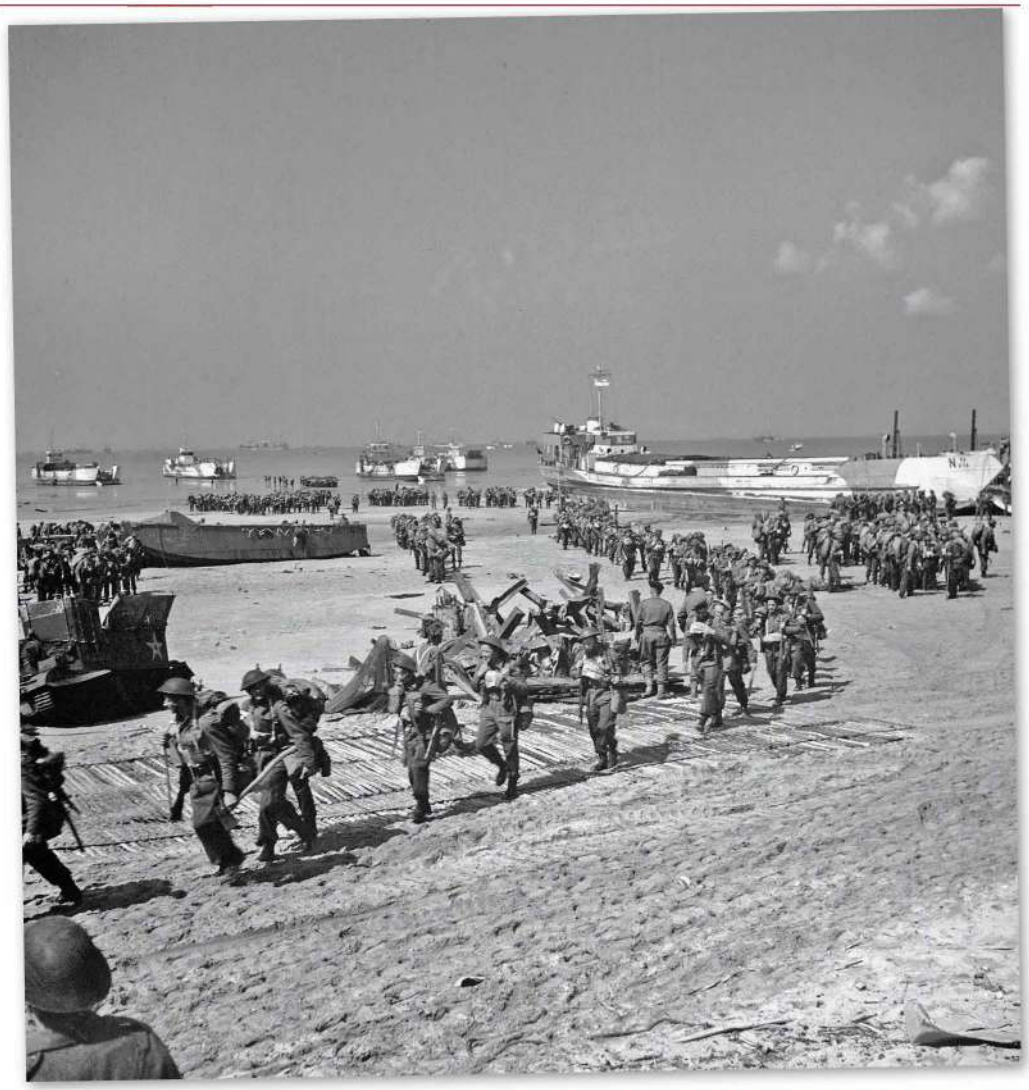
Simon Fowler
The History Press, 276 pages, £20

With this year seeing the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, and the prospect of the digitisation of most service records from 1921–1962 being (very) gradually realised, this guide couldn't come at a better time. Written by Simon Fowler, a regular contributor to *WDYTYA? Magazine* and author of several titles about researching military ancestors, the book covers every aspect of the war: all the armed forces of Britain and the Commonwealth, all the Allies and the enemy forces, as well as British civilian occupations, civil defence organisations, civilian bravery awards, the Merchant Navy and prisoners of war.

It's copiously illustrated with examples and explanations of different types of document, while the endnote section gives the addresses of the main websites and contains expanded explanations of some sections of the main text – including some amusing pithy comments.

How to Research Your Second World War Ancestors is ostensibly written for amateurs, and includes explanations of, for example, the structure of the Army and how to use websites such as the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (**cwgc.org**); however, the professional genealogist or military historian will probably find it useful quite often. At £20 I think it's good value but if you're only looking for one person, possibly not. It is certainly a book that local libraries and genealogical groups should hold, and it will be a great asset.

If I've one quibble, it's that I think the author is a bit too optimistic about the timescales for receiving digitised army service records once applied for. Those for officers usually seem to arrive in a few months, but I know some 'other rank' records are still outstanding after more than a year.



The photographs in the book include *(clockwise from above)* Canadian troops landing on Juno Beach in Normandy on D-Day (6 June 1944), a bomb map for Richmond in Surrey, and children sharing their collections of shrapnel

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS | RICHMOND ARCHIVES AND LOCAL STUDIES | MUSEUM OF RICHMOND

Phil Tomaselli is an expert in military family history, and a regular contributor to our 'Q&A' section

DIGITAL PICKS

Ella Sheffield highlights three digital resources that caught our eye this month

VIDEO

Genealogy Reviews

youtube.com/@GenealogyReviews/featured

Jackson Eagleson offers advice and comparisons of popular software used by family historians to manage records, such as RootsMagic 8, Family Historian 7 and Heredis 2024. His YouTube channel includes tutorials for using both traditional and new genealogy software, as well as detailed reviews, tips and software issues. Free.

PODCAST

The Secret Life Of Canada

cbc.ca/listen/cbc-podcasts/203-the-secret-life-of-canada

In this podcast, Leah-Simone Bowen and Falen Johnson discuss untold stories from Canada's history, uncovering fascinating tales such as the 'Moose Jaw' tunnels below Saskatchewan in Western Canada, one inventor's top-secret plans to win the Second World War by building a ship out of ice, and a "crash course" on British Home Children. Free.

EXHIBITION

Leicester In World War Two

leicester.omeka.net/exhibits/show/ww2/intro

Curated by volunteers from the University of Leicester and staff from the East Midlands Oral History Archive, this online exhibition uses text, images, videos and audio recordings of interviews to depict life during the Second World War, on both the front line and the home front. Free.

LC ALEXANDER

Scouse Republic

An Alternative History Of Liverpool

SOCIAL HISTORY

David Swift
Constable, 320 pages, £25

I very much enjoyed this book, although it is really the biography of a city and its people rather than a straightforward history (hence the "alternative" in the subtitle). It's light on facts, but weighty with opinions and impressions – an insider's view of what is surely the most characterful and controversial of British cities.

There is a relatively modest coverage of the earlier history, but *Scouse Republic* comes into its own with the mid-18th century, as Liverpool became a world city, a mecca for migrants from all across the British Isles and a social and cultural melting pot. Many important aspects of Liverpool and Scouse identity are discussed, including the now universally familiar accent (or dialect), public health, the music scene, crime and disorder, football, and trading and its connection to slavery.

The book is peopled with some extraordinary characters, and the author does not shy away from describing the lows of Liverpool life, the dark side that for some outside observers dominates.

All in all, David Swift skilfully evokes the bright, raucous, lively, noisy city. I have no Liverpool ancestors myself, but reading this book made me hope that I might find some.

Alan Crosby lives in Lancashire and is the editor of *The Local Historian*. He also writes a regular column for *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine*

Reader Review YOUR CHANCE TO ASSESS THE LATEST BOOKS

We Have A Library In Mind

An Extraordinary Survival Exercise In A Second World War Japanese Camp

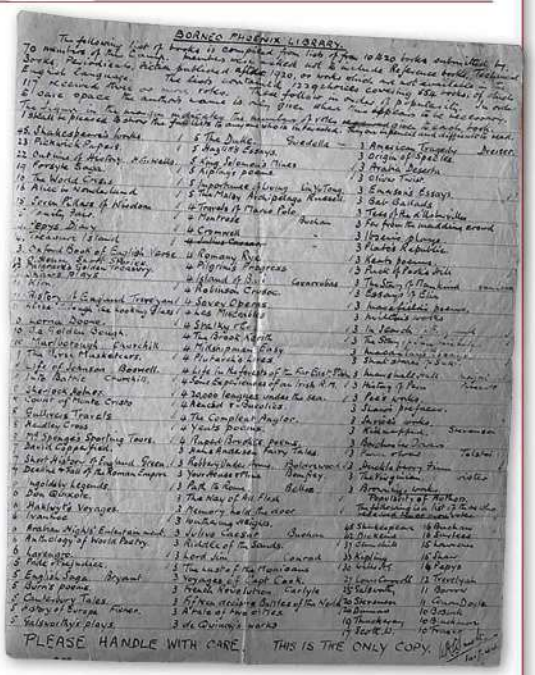
WW2

LC Alexander
Amberley, 272 pages, £22.99

We Have a Library in Mind by LC Alexander tells the story of 11 men (and one woman) who worked for the British Colonial Service and were interned as civilians in Batu Lintang, a Japanese-run prisoner-of-war Camp in Borneo. Deprived of the means to occupy themselves, the POWs decided to compile a list of the books that they would use as the foundation to restock their personal libraries on release. Alexander's grandfather Anthony Smelt was among the prisoners, and she discovered the story in his papers, which are now archived at the Imperial War Museum.

Each chapter begins with a list of the books selected by an imaginary librarian (as the participants in the scheme were known) then uses these as a reference point to relate their life story, experiences and reaction to captivity.

For a book set in a POW camp, it is remarkably easy to read. Although there are stories of horrific beatings and tortures, these are not dwelt on. Instead, the focus is on each individual's journey before and after internment.


BORNEO PHOENIX LIBRARY.

PLEASE HANDLE WITH CARE. THIS IS THE ONLY COPY.

The summary sheet of POW Anthony Smelt's imaginary library includes works by Dickens, Hardy and Kipling

Dorcas Wilson, Linlithgow
Dorcas has been researching her family history for several years

Join Us... Send us an email if you'd like to join our reviewing panel
e ***wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk***

TV & RADIO

Rosemary Collins previews upcoming programmes on history and family history

Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace

ITVX
Now streaming

Since 2011, ITV's popular family history series *Long Lost Family* has followed the moving stories of ordinary people as they try to solve family mysteries and trace their relatives, with the help of DNA testing and genealogy experts. The spin-off *Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace* focuses on the poignant stories of foundlings – people who were discovered as babies and grew up knowing nothing about their birth families. The latest series has now been released, with regular presenters Nicky Campbell and Davina McCall again helping people solve the mystery of who they are.

The first episode features Lisa Dyke, who was found as a newborn in 1969, left in a pram outside a health clinic in Christchurch, Dorset. Lisa knows nothing about her birth family, but she was left with a heartbreaking note saying, "Please take care of her. I cannot and never will be able to give her a good home." The other story follows Simon Prothero, who was found in the outside toilet block of a children's home in Neath, South-West Wales, in 1966.

Both Lisa and Simon were raised by loving adoptive parents, but they now want to find out more about their birth families. For both of them, the results of their DNA tests lead to unexpected and difficult discoveries as well as moving reunions with newly uncovered relatives.

The second episode tells the stories of Tina and Jon. Tina was left on the steps of a hospital in Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, while Jon was found in the toilet of a leisure centre in Bletchley, Buckinghamshire. They both want to know why their birth mothers left them in such circumstances. They discover the truth about their births, and Jon also has a moving reunion with the three women who, as young girls, were the ones who found him.

The final episode stars the youngest ever searcher – Sarah Meyer, who was found in a multistorey car park in 2001. It also features Christopher, who was left with a childminder as a three month old by a man who has never been identified.

Sarah Meyer *(left)* and Davina McCall in the third episode of the latest series of *Born Without Trace*

WALL TO WALL PRODUCTIONS

Auschwitz: Countdown To Liberation

Sky History Play
Now streaming

Between 1941 and 1945 an estimated 1.1 million people, mostly European Jews but also including Poles, Roma and other nationalities, were murdered by the Nazi regime at Auschwitz concentration camp in one of the greatest atrocities in human history. This documentary delves into the final months at Auschwitz before the camp's liberation by the Soviet Red Army, gradually unravelling the stories of its survivors and giving voice to the eyewitness testimonies of local residents, liberators and even perpetrators through first-hand accounts, expert interviews and dramatic reconstructions.

The Savoy: Great Hotels Through Time

My5
Now streaming

The Savoy in Central London claims to be the capital's first purpose-built luxury hotel. This documentary goes behind the scenes at the famous building – offering glimpses of its luxurious £17,500 suites – and tells the story of the hotel from its opening in 1889, including Richard D'Oyly Carte, the entrepreneur who built it, and guests such as Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana.

Death Coast

Sky History
Wednesday 16 July

The Death Coast is an area of rough sea off Nova Scotia in Canada that's claimed more than 6,000 vessels across the centuries. This documentary series follows third-generation shipwreck-hunter Jeff MacKinnon, who has won exclusive rights to salvage the wrecks. He and his team have just 12 weeks to explore before the turbulent waters of the Death Coast make diving impossible. Braving the dangers of the seas, they use obscure historic evidence to search for famous ships including *Le Chameau*, which went down in 1725 and may have been carrying a fortune in rare coins, and the *Lombrac*, an 18th-century ghost ship.

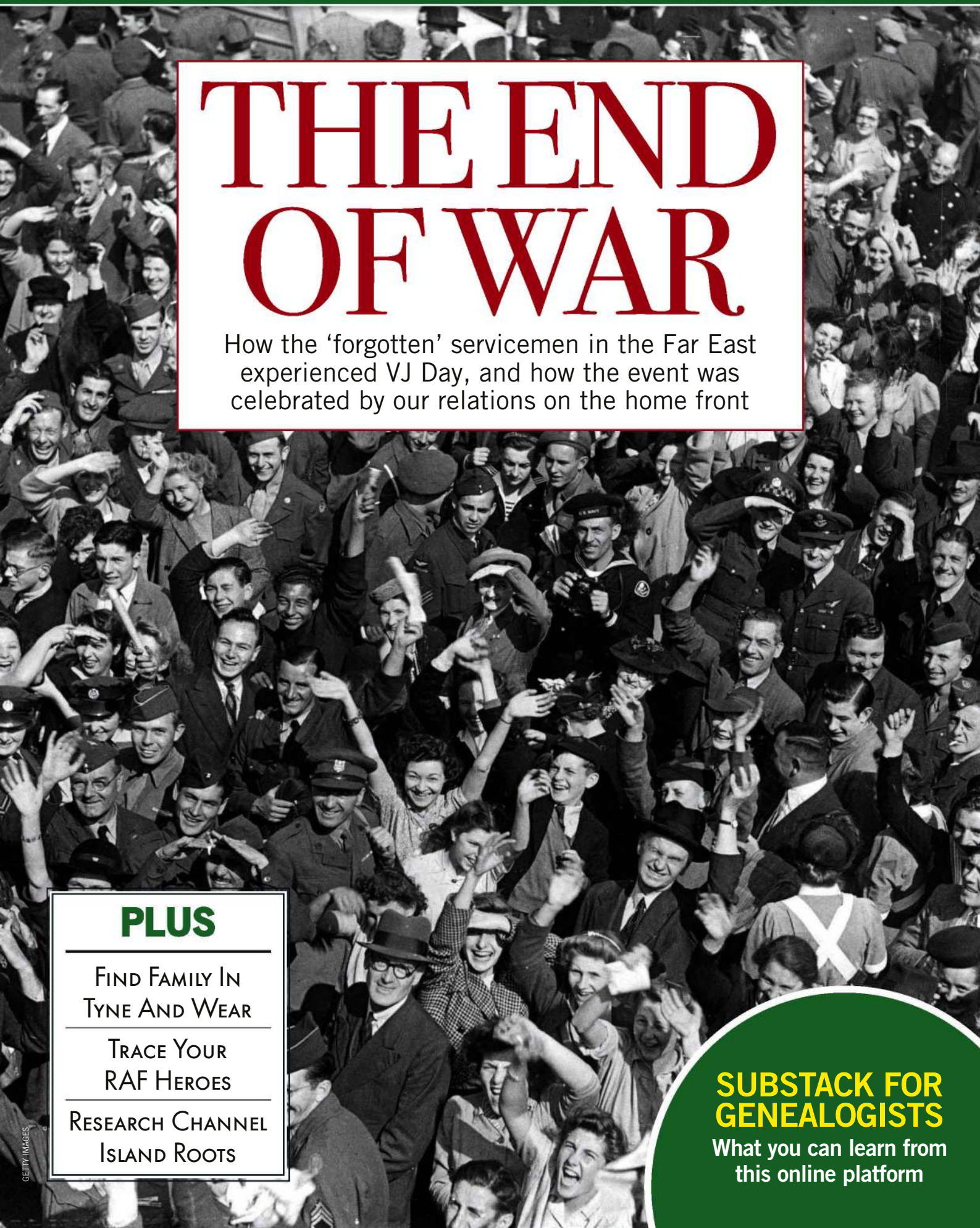
You're Dead To Me

BBC Radio 4 and BBC Sounds
Saturday 19 July

Historian Greg Jenner is back with his popular radio series where every episode sees a new historian explore a fascinating topic with a different comedian. The first two episodes will be available by the time this issue goes on sale. In the first, Greg, Prof. Frank Cogliano and comedian and actor Patton Oswalt mark 250 years since the start of the American War of Independence; while in the second, Greg travels back to the 12th century to learn about Empress Matilda and the medieval civil war known as the Anarchy with Dr Gabrielle Storey and comedian Cariad Lloyd. New episodes will be broadcast weekly, with topics including Viking women, 18th-century India, and the 250th anniversary of Jane Austen's birth.

NEXT MONTH

Our September issue goes on sale on **12 August**



THE END OF WAR

How the 'forgotten' servicemen in the Far East experienced VJ Day, and how the event was celebrated by our relations on the home front

PLUS

Find Family In Tyne And Wear

Trace Your RAF Heroes

Research Channel Island Roots

SUBSTACK FOR GENEALOGISTS

What you can learn from this online platform

GETTY IMAGES

'The Girls' Bond Helped Them Survive'

CELEBRATING YOUR DISCOVERIES

Katy Phoon's late mother was only a child when she made a new friend during the Second Sino-Japanese War, but their unique relationship lasted a lifetime. By **Gail Dixon**

Wāng Qí *(left)* and Xú Nányīng in their nurses' uniforms

A Chinese merchant arrived home in 1935 to hear screams coming from his young daughter's bedroom. Her mother and servants were holding her down and attempting to bind her feet with bandages soaked in animal blood and herbs. He ordered them to stop, saving his daughter from a lifetime of suffering.

This is the kind of anecdote that Katy Phoon heard from her mother and 'aunt' when she was growing up in Macau, south-east China. "From a young age, I sensed something different about my family," Katy explains.

"Besides my parents and younger brother, we shared our home with my 'uncle', 'aunt' and two 'cousins'. Yet, our connection was forged not by the ties of blood but by the bonds of friendship."

Katy's mother Wāng Qí was born in Kaifeng, eastern China, in 1935. Her 'aunt' Xú Nányīng was born five years earlier, also in China, and it was she who escaped having her feet bound.

Their world was thrown into peril during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) when China was occupied by Japan.

"My mum's father was an official for the Kuomintang, which was the Republic of China's ruling party at the time. He had been posted to various locations with his family, and faced particular danger."

Fiercely independent, Wāng Qí narrowly escaped death during a bombing raid when she refused to go to the air-raid shelter. In 1943, she was sent to relative safety in a Catholic boarding school run by nuns in the French Concession of Hankou (now Wuhan).

It was there that Wāng Qí met the ever-cheerful Xú Nányīng, who took the younger girl under her wing, and they became inseparable. Neither of them knew how their families were faring through the horrors of war.

The Japanese occupation of China has been dubbed the Asian Holocaust and it's estimated that some 20 million Chinese people died due to bombings, famine and massacres. The school's pupils were mostly sheltered from violence, although they had to navigate childhood while desperately missing their families.

"Food was rationed, and the nuns demanded the girls finish all their food. When Wāng Qí refused to eat the thin porridge which she found disgusting, Xú Nányīng gulped it down so that her friend would avoid punishment. Most of the nuns were kind, dedicated and keen to ensure that their pupils received a good education, and taught the girls Latin hymns."

Wāng Qí narrowly escaped death when she refused to go to the air-raid shelter

KATY PHOON lives in Hong Kong and worked as a lawyer in the satellite industry before becoming an author

Wāng Qí and Xú Nányīng stayed at the school after the war finished. Xú Nányīng's brother survived the war, but both her parents died. Wāng Qí never discovered what happened to her father or younger brothers, but her mother also died, possibly due to opium withdrawal.

"My mum and 'aunt' left the school in the early 1950s, and went to Macau," Katy explains. "They became nurses, working not just in China but also Hong Kong and Malaysia."

Wāng Qí and Xú Nányīng's bond of sisterhood endured, and they lived together for the rest of their lives. Fate brought them to meet two best buddies in Macau, Zhāng Shìkuí (Katy's father) and Yáng Guāngxīn, and the two pairs of best friends had a double wedding in 1963. "Mum and Aunt said that they spent the best times of their lives in Macau."

Katy has paid tribute to Wāng Qí and Xú Nányīng's fortitude in her debut novel *A Fine Piece of Jade* (The Book Guild, 2025), a vivid and touching portrayal of life under occupation. "Orphaned by war, these two girls were blessed with an extraordinary friendship that was passed on to the next generation. My younger 'cousin' calls me *ga jie* meaning older sister in Cantonese."

Katy's novel was published by The Book Guild on 28 April (RRP £9.99)

WHO'S YOUR HERO?

Share your family hero with us and they could appear in the magazine!

Each month we'll award our favourite a year's subscription to **findmypast.co.uk** worth £199.99.

Find my past

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*

BBC wildlife

TRY 3 ISSUES FOR £6*

when you subscribe to *BBC Wildlife* magazine

- Try your first **3 issues for just £6***
- Continue to pay just **£22.99 every 6 issues – saving 30%** off the shop price
- **Free UK delivery** direct to your door in environmentally friendly wrapping
- **Never miss an issue** of the world's oldest and best-selling wildlife magazine!

Subscribe online or call us...

Visit **www.ourmediashop.com/WLHA25**

or call **03330 162 121**† QUOTE CODE **WLHA25**

*3 issues for £6 available to UK Direct Debit orders only. After your first 3 issues, your subscription will continue at just £22.99 every 6 issues, saving more than 30% on the shop price. If you cancel within two weeks of receiving your second issue, you will pay no more than £6. Your subscription with start with the next available issue. †UK calls will cost the same as other standard fixed line numbers (starting 01 or 02) and are included as part of any inclusive or free minutes allowances (if offered by your phone tariff). Outside of free call packages, call charges from mobile phones will cost between 3p and 55p per minute. Lines are open Mon to Fri 8am-6pm and Sat 9am-1pm. Offer ends 31st January 2026.

You'll never want to holiday any other way

At Cruise Collective, we know a standout voyage when we see one—and Celebrity Cruises delivers time and again. With nearly 300 destinations across seven continents, their ships combine the charm of smaller vessels with the excitement of larger ones. A leader in modern cruising for 35 years, Celebrity continues to push boundaries, including with the highly anticipated Celebrity Xcel launching in Autumn 2025.

Set sail beyond expectations – book today

CRUISE COLLECTIVE

Limited Time Saving

£150 OFF

PER PERSON

Take advantage of this exclusive offer on bookings of up to two people per cabin – ends 31 August

Join Cruise Collective for free
cruise-collective.com

Visit the website for full T&Cs